

ESSAYS BY DIVERS HANDS

BEING THE

TRANSACTIONS

OF THE

ROYAL SOCIETY OF LITERATURE OF THE UNITED KINGDOM

NEW SERIES

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INTRODUCTION.

BY W. B. MAXWELL, F.R.S.L.

As habitual and proper with the 'Transactions' of the Society, the collected essays for the year are not only by divers hands, but on divers subjects. Yet, varied as is the material treated, it has seemed to me that the papers share one very distinct attribute in common, and that they are thus all naturally linked together. It is the historical point of view. In the arrangement of their sequence I have been guided almost solely by this consideration, not placing them in chronological order, or seeking a recognized priority of actual theme, but allowing them to follow one another after the manner best calculated to arouse and sustain a pleasing continuity of thought in the reader's mind.

Our contents-table opens and closes, then, with the study of a single author, Charles Lamb to begin and Lord Rochester to end. Between come four essays of wider scope and a more general aim. The four together give, unless I am mistaken, an harmonious as well as a clear survey of the influences, the manners, methods, and changing fashions, that have moulded English literature from long past times and are still moulding it to-day. They deal, titulary, with Jurisprudence and Thought, the Authors of a Provincial Centre, the Novel and its Function, and some English antiquaries.

Perhaps one might have felt compelled to start with the essay on Charles Lamb, even if Mr. Ellis Roberts had not made of it the very charming thing that he has, simply because Lamb is Lamb. One might say, as a gentle conceit, that when the time came to allot to Charles Lamb one of the prepared niches in the Temple of Posthumous Fame, it was found that he could not fit comfortably into any of them and a new special niche had to be constructed for him. Certainly it has long been a commonplace, even in dictionaries and encyclopaedias, to say that his position with regard to our literature is unique and unchallengeable. He and his works are loved together. We know Charles Lamb as a person who actually lived and wrote, with a knowledge warmer and more intimate than that which we are able to entertain for any other author. And in making this sweeping statement I do not forget Oliver Goldsmith or Sam Johnson.

No author who, comparatively speaking, wrote so little has had so much written about him. His own books can be lodged in the corner of a shelf ; whereas the books relating to him, if one includes pamphlets, long reviews, critical examinations, biographical sketches, and so forth, would fill a library. To write about Elia has become an industry. Or at least it is recognized as a "special line" in the literary profession ; and big as the supply is, the demand grows year by year to meet it. One scarcely exaggerates if one declares that sooner or later in his career every gifted and cultivated man of letters writes a Life of Lamb. This perhaps is as it should be. But unfortunately the less-dowered cannot leave

him alone. They, too, must try their hands at the pleasant task. So that, personally, I have often felt that I am getting shut off from Lamb himself by the dense surrounding crowd of his admirers. And just as in some of the Elia Saga from talented pens there is now and then a suggestion of artificiality, a slight distortion of phrase perhaps unconsciously employed as an echo of the Master's tricky elegance, there is sometimes among the smaller fry a strong hint of insincerity, as though they were throwing off their complimentary adjectives less from feeling than from habit.

Mr. Ellis Roberts is altogether free from such slight drawbacks to contented acceptance. He writes, as always, with a distinction that is entirely his own, and the sincerity of his manner is as engaging as the enlightened quality of his matter. Mr. Roberts promises to speak of his author in a "personal way", and he fulfils this promise handsomely. It is a vivid picture that he makes of the man called Charles Lamb and known as Elia. Indeed on the small canvas at his disposal he succeeds (paradoxically) in painting a life-sized portrait. Perhaps I have already said a little more than enough. My duty is merely to introduce. Nevertheless, I cannot abstain from asking the reader's particular attention to the fine scorn and generous eloquence with which Mr. Roberts demolishes an author who recently spoke of Charles Lamb as "the ordinary man *in excelsis*". These final pages of the essay might well be put on permanent record for the future use of devotees when molested or annoyed by detractors.

From that brilliant literary epoch of Charles Lamb

and his contemporaries, Southey, Coleridge, Keats, Wordsworth, and the other shining lights, Professor de Montmorency carries us backward through the ages and then forward again in his paper, 'The Influence of Jurisprudence on English Thought'. Nothing could well be more interesting to the student of causes and consequences than this story of the linked progress of legal science and literary art. Some questions may occur, and unhappily these can never be answered by the writer of the paper. Professor de Montmorency died in the spring of this year. His death meant a loss not only to our Society, but to far larger spheres. An able and industrious scholar, he had done much for the advancement of learning and culture. But he would have done so much more. Judged by the modern standards of longevity, Professor de Montmorency was still young enough to have had many years of active and useful life before him.

In 'The Contribution of a Provincial Centre (Norwich) to English Letters', again we have the historical aspect of things; for Mr. R. H. Mottram, beginning with a lucid and penetrating examination of the differences in the literary importance exercised by the capitals in France and in England, goes on to sketch the character and career of a group of authors from Plantagenet days to those of the Royal House of Windsor. These all belonged to the ancient city of Norwich. As Mr. Mottram shows us, they have not in any sense formed a school, as with the Norwich School of Painters, but merely succeed one another as author following author, with that residential background, the old cathedral city. Scenes, episodes,

individuals, move across Mr. Mottram's page with a rapid convincingness to which he has accustomed his readers in another form of composition. It is, of course, needless to add, although Mr. Mottram carefully refrains from reminding one of the fact, that he himself is the latest distinguished ornament in the long succession of Norwich authors.

We pass directly to the consideration of the novel both in the past and the present, with Mr. Bonamy Dobrée submitting what has become a literary conundrum for which, so far as I know, no one among the many solutions offered is universally accepted: 'Has the Novel a Function To-day?' The subject is frequently discussed among novelists themselves, and I am glad that Mr. Dobrée freely quotes the views expressed by some of them. But I think I like better Mr. Dobrée's own views, because they appear to be more generalized and expansive. He gives us some very clear definitions of a basic sort. With peculiar aptness, moreover, he cites authorities, and extracts from them several phrases which seem to glow with good sense when thus brought out again into the light. Something that Meredith said about the clockwork of the brain and the conscience that resides in thoughtfulness was most especially worth reproduction.

In the next essay, as a rapid transition from the realm of fiction to that of very hard fact, Mr. H. B. Walters tells of those English Antiquaries who, during four centuries, have arduously, patiently, disinterestedly, pursued their labour in research and exposition. There were, as Mr. Walters takes pleasure in recounting, some odd characters among them.

But there was not one of them who does not deserve our respect and gratitude for carrying forward a work so useful as to be of national importance.

There are names the mere sound of which evokes glamour and romance. Of such names are Lovelace, Shelley, Byron, but certainly not Keats or Tennyson or Browning. These last-mentioned bring to one's mind the men's work and wide associations with the work, but very little concerning the men themselves. Charles Lamb, as has been noted, is a striking case of the name conjuring up instantaneously the man and his work together. Readers, I think, will agree that the name of Rochester to nine people out of ten represents an age rather than a person. He is a figure symbolically standing for a brief historical period during which vice and licentiousness held sway in high places, while decent folk, vicariously ashamed, withdrew almost into hiding to await that Second Restoration which should be the recovery of England's self-respect. He was a poet as one knows, but one has no respect for his poetry. In it he revelled in profligate imaginings with high lights of gross obscenity. His brief biographies tell one that as well as debauchee, drunkard, and so forth, he was a coward, although he had shown considerable courage in youth. Worn out and dishonoured, he died when no more than thirty years of age ; and perhaps from the day of his death only two people have spoken really well of him, saying something to his credit without anything to detract from their praise. One was Bishop Burnet, who extracted a famous deathbed repentance, and assured the world of the sincerity of the convert's good resolutions. The other was

Swinburne, who, in a less known context, said that Dryden was not for a moment to be compared with Rochester as a song writer.

But here at last is somebody not only speaking good words for him, but most ably disentangling the confusion of thought in regard to his life and his talents from which he has suffered. Mr. de Sola Pinto in the truly admirable essay at the conclusion of our volume does all this and more. He establishes a fine vindication of Rochester's claims to high eminence in the hierarchy of English poets.

Personally I have always been much interested in the question of the close relation or connection between a writer and his writings. It has seemed to me curious that, if one takes into account the great range of the personal element as shown in books—some authors really obtruding themselves, others entirely obliterating themselves—there should be such a persistent belief that one can really penetrate to the character of a man while reading his pages. Among the unliterary, of course, the whole thing is accepted as a communication given to them directly by the author. Sometimes such innocents cannot even discriminate between the words, the language, the opinions, that he puts into the mouth of a fictitious character, the philosophic reflections that are obviously quoted from other authors, and the passages that are as plainly an expression of what he himself thinks. But with highly educated people I have often been astonished in observing how completely their comprehension and judgment of a piece of literature may be frustrated by their previous knowledge and prejudices concerning its creator. As

Mr. de Sola Pinto points out, it is a "crude kind of psychology that divides up mankind into neatly labelled groups". Still further, if one could class people as either good or bad, disregarding the immense complexity of every human mind, one should surely remember that morality and art are, if not absolutely two heterogeneous dimensions, at least insusceptible of measurement by the same fixed standard.

That there is an inherent connection between "the style and the man" no one, of course, would deny. Some years ago Mr. E. E. Sikes, in a valuable work on Roman Poetry, had a passage that I noted, because it struck me as being a most satisfactory summing-up of the whole matter. As in every sense introductory to Mr. de Pinto's paper I will venture to quote it in full: "The position contains both a truism and—as generally in truisms—an error. To say, with Seneca, *talis oratio qualis vita*, or, with Buffon, *le style c'est l'homme même*, is true beyond need of argument, in the broad sense that any 'style' worthy of the name, must reflect personality. We are all agreed that no poem, no work of art, can have value except in so far as it reveals the man. It need not reveal the details of his private life—many, besides Browning, have doubted whether there is a key to unlock Shakespeare's heart—but it must express what is permanently inspiring in the artist's soul. Indeed the distinction between great and little work is simply the difference between a great and a mediocre personality. So far, we are all Senecan; and, on the 'moral' side we may well concede that no thoroughly 'bad' man would or could have written the 'Divine Comedy' or 'Paradise Lost'.

To this extent, the author of 'Paradise Lost' was justified in claiming that 'he who would not be frustrated of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things, ought himself to be a true poem'. But the Stoic belief that a man's style—in the narrower and purely literary sense of the word—is good or bad according to his moral life, rests on the fallacy that the terms 'goodness' and 'badness' have the same connotation in art as in ethics—a theory killed by the ridicule of the single line, 'Who drives fat oxen should himself be fat'. The author of this line might himself be mentioned as proof that style is not always a complete or accurate reflex of personality. If we had no Boswell, could we possibly have reconstructed Johnson's character, with all its blunt directness and absolute sincerity, from the formal and often artificial style of his own prose?"

Mr. Sola de Pinto urges no more than this in his defence of Rochester the poet, although he is able to show that Rochester the man possessed many qualities and attributes that have been ignored by posterity. He reminds one also that Rochester has borne the obloquy of many things for which others were guilty. Immediately after Rochester's death, he says, "there appeared the first of a long series of dishonest editions issued by publishers of very doubtful reputation, in which all kinds of obscene doggerel, on much of which Rochester never set eyes, has been fathered on the unfortunate Earl".

CHARLES LAMB.

BY R. ELLIS ROBERTS.

[Read March 21st, 1934.]

“WHO, like him, can throw, or ever attempt to throw, a preternatural interest over the commonest daily-life objects? A table, a joint stool, in his conception, rises into a dignity equivalent to Cassiopeia's chair. It is invested with constellatory importance. You could not speak of it with more deference, if it were mounted into the firmament. A beggar in the hands of Michelangelo, says Fuseli, rose the Patriarch of Poverty. So the gusto of Munden antiquates and ennobles what it touches. His pots and his ladles are as grand and primal as the seething-pots and hooks seen in the old prophetic vision. A tub of butter, contemplated by him, amounts to a Platonic idea. He understands a leg of mutton in its quiddity. He stands wondering, amid the commonplace materials of life, like a primeval man with the sun and stars about him.”

So Charles Lamb on Munden, the actor; and I do not know where one could find words more appropriate to Charles Lamb's own genius. The quality of that genius may best be shown by the fact that it has always attracted other men of genius, or men of strong idiosyncrasy; not only in Lamb's lifetime,

but now, a hundred years after his death, he has that same power of attraction. Had he contributed as little to the arts as his friend Manning, we should still be curious about the man whom Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, Dyer, Haydon, Keats, Crabb Robinson, Hazlitt, John Clare, Bernard Barton, the Procters and Tom Hood were glad to call friend; who found it possible to be friendly with Godwin, and whom Thomas Carlyle, his Boeotian bile checked in its flow by Lamb's baffling and stammering urbanity, honoured by a malediction unequalled, even in Carlyle, for its virulence and its frantic unfairness. Fortunate in his friends in life, Charles Lamb has had, since his death, something of his deserts. Talfourd, Ainger, E. V. Lucas, William Macdonald—these four, as editors and commentators, have helped and confirmed the enthusiasm of all Elians by the justness of their praise and the diligent ingenuity of their research. We need, luckily, very little corroboration for our admiration of Charles Lamb; but if we did, might we not find it in the worship given to Lamb by Thackeray, the only Victorian who had something of Lamb's own temper, find it in the fact that Lamb has inspired what is to my mind the best prose-book of one of our clearest poets, Edmund Blunden's 'Charles Lamb and his Contemporaries'?

For myself—I had better make quickly this acknowledgment—I have but one fault to find in Lamb; and a casuist might plausibly argue that this fault is not Lamb's fault. It is a grave thing to be of that kind, to have in your works so quickening a quality that your admirers, if they have in however slight a degree, the power of writing, cannot forbear

writing about you. That is Lamb's fault—or fate. It must be my excuse this afternoon. I have written, at one time or another, a good deal about Charles Lamb, and as I looked through some of my old essays, I found in them things which seemed to me tolerably pretty, sometimes far better than that—these were quotations, from those who had a right to commit Eliana, or from Charles Lamb himself. In so far as the meeting this afternoon is a celebration of the centenary, it demands homage, not apology; but I am sadly aware that the occasion could be far more appropriately kept. Would it not have been best had we met, in the strict similitude of a Quakers' meeting and waited, in that ancient silence, until some one of us should have arisen, like Lamb's man of great stature, and confessed "he had been a WIT in his youth"? I was advised, however, that such a plan would be contrary to the usages of this Society, which, while it does not forbid silence, prefers that a Fellow should not presume on our ability "to enjoy one another's want of conversation", as is the rule, said Lamb, of the Carthusians, but should prelude the proceedings by speech, however temerarious.

I hope you will agree with me that it will be appropriate to Lamb's genius and temperament if my paper is desultory. Few of our great men are, to my mind, worthier of serious treatment and of a consideration more profound than I can pretend to give you than Charles Lamb; but few, I think, would have cared less for too ceremonial and solemn an inquiry into his character. So I propose this afternoon to speak on one or two aspects of Lamb as a man and

an author in a rather more personal way than would be fitting to a more academic nature.

It is impossible to write about Lamb as one might about the older essayists, Addison, Johnson, or even Dick Steele and Goldsmith. Those two last make us aware, in their essays, of their tastes and idiosyncrasies—they reveal things about themselves. Lamb reveals himself. There is scarcely a page of the essays which does not show us Lamb in his quiddity; we listen to what he has to say, but even more we listen to Lamb saying it. His passion for the theatre is here a sure indication of his character; he has the gift of the great actor, the capacity to subdue himself to other personalities, and yet to remain unmistakably Charles Lamb. His literary immortality depends as much on his self, as on his creations; he can dramatize himself without affectation or falsehood, and at times we regard him as himself a literary creation, and give to him that ultimate, inexplicable reality which we ascribe to the great creations of the supreme dramatists and novelists. Bacon and Dr. Johnson and Addison are no doubt as real as the present Lord Chancellor, or Mr. J. L. Garvin, or the Dean of St. Paul's; but Charles Lamb is as real as Don Quixote, or Mr. Pickwick, or King Lear's Fool. He himself is at once artist and work of art. This chiefly, no doubt, applies to 'Elia'—a deliberate piece of self-production; but it is true not seldom, even when he appears in his own person. Yet Lamb is saved, by his dramatic talent (a talent not alas! to be found in his plays), from that tidy and exiguous exhibitionism which is the temptation of the artist who 'dramatizes himself. For his dramatic talent,

his unrivalled eye for the personalities of others, his supreme power of affection, his deep moral sense of the rights of others, keep him entirely clear from that shallow egotism which has spoiled so much personal writing since his time. Neither discipline nor duty has yet come into fashion again (though there are signs of their return) ; is it not worth noticing how discipline and duty, inspired, as they must be if they are to be virtuous, by profound love, enabled Lamb not to be less of a person, less of a character, but gave him at once a scope and a profundity which no other personal author (unless we count Swift in that company) has ever achieved. His life lacked comfort, and gained in comeliness ; it lacked ease and gained ecstasy ; he had little self-ambition and achieved almost perfect self-expression ; and in the service and enjoyment of his friends' company he found a solitariness as productive as the solitariness of the religious. Hence Thackeray's 'Saint Charles,'—an encomium whose absolute rightness has been insufficiently appreciated. Others than Thackeray had noticed Lamb's kinship with that company which is a great deal larger than that of the formally canonized. In P. G. Patmore's reminiscences there is a passage which might easily have been written about Saint Philip Neri, Saint Vincent of Paul, or even Saint Francis. Lamb, Patmore writes :

“generally through life had two or three especial pets, who were always the most disagreeable people in the world—to the world. To be taken into Lamb's favour and protection you had only to get discarded, defamed and shunned by everybody else ; and if you deserved this treatment, so much the better ! If I may venture so to express myself, there was

in Lamb's eyes a sort of sacredness in sin, on account of its sure ill consequences to the sinner ; and he seemd to open his arms and his heart to the rejected and reviled of mankind in a spirit kindred at least with that of the Deity."

We know whence Charles Lamb derived the strength of his sympathy for all suffering things. Here we are more fortunate than most of his contemporaries ; for few outside the circle of his intimate friends knew that Lamb himself, before he was twenty-one, had been confined in the madhouse at Hoxton, which a year later received his sister Mary, after she had killed their mother. Charles Lamb's courage and devotion in giving his sister the shelter of their home would be beyond praise, even if he had himself been a man of perfectly robust health ; such action from one, himself so recently afflicted, has in it the quality of sanctity. For there was nothing of the morbid commerce between two mentally unstable persons, none of the dreadful delectation which may exist in the melancholy circles of the lunatic ; Charles Lamb and his sister each passionately respected and desired sanity, and it was to assist her in her efforts to recapture sanity that Lamb wished to have Mary live with him. While it is possible to exaggerate the extent of their common experience, it is not possible to make too much of the intensity of that experience, at least for Charles Lamb ; and especially for Charles Lamb the artist. No man will reach the greatest art possible to him unless he know, by experience or by sympathy, the nature of madness : for it is the intellectual and æsthetic equivalent of that spiritual experience which the mystics have called *The Dark Night of the Soul*. Just as True Being is only

revealed to those who have endured the despair which says there is no Being; so Reason and its beauty are known fully only to those who have known what it is to know reason overthrown, have sunk, if only for a moment, into that maelstrom of the mind where the true and the false, the apparent and the actual are whirled together in a common disaster of hallucination. To have known that, and to have emerged from it, as Charles Lamb escaped, is to reach an assurance never vouchsafed to those who are unacquainted with that bleak country of the mind. For the man who has had this experience, either in his own actual life or in his soul by virtue of mystical substitution, has passed the barriers which divide mental distress, with its self-regarding torment, from grief with its care and affection for others. The artist passes from the exercise of the intellect to the enjoyment of wisdom.

It is one of the vexations of the professed intellectual that whereas emotion, particularly the emotion of grief, may raise an author into the first rank, mental distress, however acute and sincere, will never accomplish this. Perhaps this is only an instance of the truth that poetry is always greater than prose; for when deeply moved the heart speaks naturally in poetic phrase, but the mind, when exacerbated or puzzled or sorrowful in the way that the mind may know grief, expresses itself best in prose. It might be said without untruth that no supremely great art was ever accomplished by men incapable of deep emotional suffering. If a man has that capacity, though his work be naturally prosaic, he will have the character of the poet; the fact that his work is in

prose will be an accident of technique, or of some idiosyncrasy that defies the poetic instinct. In our own day two authors fail, I think, of supreme distinction because they lack the quality of deep emotion, and so remain, not only formally, but in spirit, profoundly prosaic writers. Posterity will never be able to place either Mr. Bernard Shaw or his master Erehon Butler with the very greatest of the world's authors, because their work lacks the note of emotional suffering. Indignation is theirs, and a righteous anger ; but they are always self-conscious, and in the arts as in other matters the man who would save his life must lose it. It is here that Butler and Shaw are both excelled by our greatest master of pure prose, Jonathan Swift ; for Swift was poet in the spirit, and suffered spiritual and emotional agonies, as well as the difficulties of mental torment. There is always, when the brain is strong, a certain delectation in purely intellectual distress—the man of genius has a strange satisfaction in finding his way out of it, and in proclaiming to others how a road of escape can be found. The man who experiences profound emotional suffering has no such ingenuity of delight ; he is merged in his grief, but not subdued by it, and when he would render out of it a work of art, it will have that inexplicable quality of “ mania ” which belongs to the artist.

It is the absence of grief which renders pusillanimous and lamentably trivial so much admirably accomplished modern literature. Perhaps at no period have there been more authors who can succeed so magnificently in the rendering of the giggles, the hysterics, the inarticulate and painful manifestations

of pain and sorrow ; but that seems to some of us of little value if there is failure to show what is symbolized by these marks of distress. Mr. Edmund Blunden's 'Undertones of War' was successful precisely because it succeeded in rendering something of the reality that is obscured in most war books by the authors' inability to escape from their preoccupations with symptoms. We are a generation of watchers—accurate, painstaking, inhumanly just—but no great art was ever made out of "watching". Unless we can once more return to suffering and sympathy, either actual or imaginative, I can foresee an art that becomes more and more arid, an arrangement exquisitely skilful of dead flowers and tortured blossoms, a thing of ingenuity and no passion, something perpetually bright—and if there is anything duller than perpetual boredom it is perpetual brightness. It is here that Lamb has so tonic a medicine for our time. I know some modern young snips who resent not a little the assumption, still pretty general, that Lamb has never been excelled as an essayist. I would suggest that the reason for his supremacy lies here, in his capacity for deep sorrow. How it shows in all his references to death ! There is that tiny, delicate etching, 'A Death-Bed'. In the first sentences Lamb made a composition which, for sheer rightness, could not be beaten by Dürer :

"I called upon you this morning, and found that you were gone to visit a dying friend. I had been upon a like errand. Poor N. R. has lain dying now for almost a week ; such is the penalty we pay for having enjoyed through life a strong constitution. Whether he knew me or not, I know not, or whether he saw me through his poor glazed eyes ; but the

group I saw about him I shall not forget. Upon the bed, or about it, were assembled his wife, their two daughters, and poor deaf Robert, looking doubly stupefied. There they were, and seemed to have been sitting all the week. I could only reach out a hand to Mrs. R. Speaking was impossible in that mute chamber."

The essay asks aid for the bereaved, and it ends with the lovely brevity of "Oblige me and the dead, if you can".

In this way of speaking and thinking of death I find a healthiness and a natural simplicity which are foreign to modern manners in certain countries and societies. I have never understood why attention to the dead should be regarded as abnormal, still less why this opinion should be so largely promulgated by those who have no belief in immortality. Nothing is more certain than the fact of death, and if it be an event with no alleviation or escape, why are those wrong who, seeing the race of man doomed miserably to end in that majesty's secure nullification, would no longer seek to make anything out of life, if life is but the dream of a moment, and annihilation the ultimate truth? Or are they only going to cheat themselves into a faith they despise? And so they tie ribbons to Death's grisly wrists, and cover him with flowers, and chatter brightly and briskly in that mute chamber where Charles Lamb felt that even words of sympathy would be abashed to break the silence. This insensitiveness to what is appropriate, this effort to dodge death or to defeat desire—for passion has always been strongest when the majesty of death has been given his due—are but a part of the general lack of feeling that is fashionable to-day. A man is considered

glum if he does not allow casual intimacy to flower quickly and fade as quickly as it flowers; and the last thing now considered in our friends is their characters, whether they agree with ours, or whether anything of permanence and beauty is made out of our contact. We would make all life a spectacle of that kind which the "talkie" best typifies; and we can bear anything in life except that which produces emotion and the thought that is fed by and gives strength to emotion.

It is for his abundance in these qualities that I treasure 'Elia'. All his thought is at once imaginative and deeply felt; and his knowledge is held by the man's whole self, a self of such sanity that one is tempted to predicate for all men who would be sane a touch of the mental instability that marked Charles Lamb. As I re-read the essays, I wondered if anyone had noticed Lamb's astounding fearlessness. Like all men, he had limitations; but most men's limitations are due to fear, or to its child, vanity; Lamb's seem due merely to lack of opportunity, or to the sensible recognition of a natural disability. Any critic can see how fear limited most of his contemporaries—Byron, Landor, Wordsworth, Southey, Coleridge; Lamb and Keats are alone in possessing the greatest artists' humility which forbids fear, just as it prevents pride. Lamb, who had so many reasons for diffidence, remained as free from it as a child, and dwelt, as William Blake did, in that magical land which we find it so hard to enter. It will be a dreary day if ever we have to write of it, as Lamb wrote of the land of the witches: "We do not know the laws of that country."

I was born not a mile from that Colebrooke Cottage in which Charles Lamb lived, and from whose gate he watched the dear and desultory George Dyer "with staff in hand, and at noonday, deliberately march right into the midst of the stream which runs by us, and totally disappear"; "to witness", says Lamb, "in the broad daylight such an unreserved motion towards self-destruction in a valued friend, took from me all power of speculation", and promptly contradicts his decision by speculation which results in that delightful essay 'Amicus Redivivus'. It was my privilege—I was born some fifty-five years after Lamb's death—to know at any rate some reaches of the New River as Lamb knew them, and to find still in Islington faint and far-off traditions of the village which it was when Charles Lamb lived there. True I only heard my elders' memories of that village; but as old people will, they kept firm to the idea of Islington as a separate place, connected commercially no doubt with the City, vaguely conscious of Belgravia and Mayfair, but not in the least *of* London. Charles Lamb himself is largely responsible for the tale that he was a confirmed and hopeless Cockney. Carlyle, with that genius of his for presenting surfaces and never coming nigh the depths, to which he so portentously appealed, speaks with Scotch contempt of Lamb as "Cockney to the marrow. Cockney and applauded by Cockneydom". (I suspect Charles's intense, subtle and allusive humour, farsed, as with these two, it would have been, by a pleasant wit of quick puns and stuttering jests, had been rather too much for Thomas's pawky certainty, and the young Jane's provincial pertness.) Lamb was no Londoner

in our sense of the word ; if for no other reason than for this, that there was in his day no such London as there is now. More than this, however, Lamb was not a Londoner as other men of his day were Londoners ; and he was remote from spiritual or aesthetic Cockneydom as Leigh Hunt always, and Keats occasionally, was near to it. Born in one of the Inns of Court, at school in the renascence seclusion of Christ's Hospital, living in the Temple, in Islington, at Enfield (a wilder place then than is most of Dartmoor to-day), Lamb was no Londoner. That is why he loved London. He visited London, and found in that city what he brought to it ; and if that is true of most of us with regard to the places we admire, how we must regret that we have no tittle of Charles Lamb's ability to discover what we love in the places where we look for it. When Charles Lamb lived in Islington it was no more London than is to-day the country near Hatfield or Bishop's Stortford. It was a village with a village green and a village stream—the stream, it is true, had been rather straitly canalized by the genius of Hugh Myddleton ; but it was still a stream. In Charles Lamb's Islington, people still go to drink the waters at Sadlers' Wells, as some decades later they frequented the theatre there to see the great clown Joe Grimaldi, or Samuel Phelps anticipating Shakespearean glories of the present playhouse ; still, by a stretch of fancy, you could watch the bailiff's daughter in a country dance with Topham the strong man ; still there were rumours of that poor, crazed prophetess Joanna Southcott, burdened with a new Gospel and an unborn Messiah ; and in the passage behind Islington Green you could

see the stiff figure of Alexander Cruden, not too sane after his great achievement of the Concordance to the Holy Bible. That this was so in Charles Lamb's day I can swear; for it was not untrue sixty years or more after his death. I can remember the days when I sat on the banks of the New River in my grandmother's garden and enticed crayfish from those unlikely waters; when the vine in the greenhouse yielded grapes which would not disgrace the great vine of Hampton Court. I can remember my father taking me to Colebrooke Cottage and showing me the exact spot at which George Dyer had made his immortal and unconscious descent into the river, when Lamb saw "but the silvery apparition of a good white head emerging; nigh which a staff (the hand unseen which wielded it) pointed upwards, as feeling for the skies".

It was thus, in my boyhood, that Lamb became my favourite essayist; and has remained so, though the Islington that he knew and I fancied, and was told of, has now disappeared, with the almost complete disappearance of the New River into convenient, hygienic and detestable pipes. The age of constriction has succeeded the age of construction. Lamb in the nineties of last century was the essayist for an Islington boy who cared for letters. I had read Bacon before him. I had read some Addison, and even looked into those early character writers—Earle and Overbury—who borrowed from the Greek, and anticipated the later comedy of manners. But Lamb was my—our—family essayist. There may have been something, no doubt, of privilege and prejudice in the choice; but if prejudice and privilege lead us

to the truth, do not let us cry shame on them. Lamb was a kind of Civil Servant; he had suffered the discipline of the desk, and had been at school on the high stool. My grandfather—he died before I was born, but I have a clear idea of his character and his creed from his widow and his daughters—had been a distinguished Civil Servant. He had had under him two men of letters, one of genius, the other of talent, and of a family of genius. He was a stern Evangelical who looked askance at most imaginative literature—were not the Waverley novels kept in a locked bookcase in his house, a fact very conducive to youthful appetite?—and, so looking, I gathered that what he most esteemed in the conduct of Mr. Anthony Trollope, one of his clerks, was that gentleman's ingenious invention of the pillar box. Of Mr. William Michael Rossetti, another servant in the Inland Revenue, I always understood him to admit that he was a good clerk, if one considered his unfortunate relationship to that sad scapegrace, Dante Gabriel. Charles Lamb, however, who was a kind of Civil Servant, came under a less strict judgment, possibly because he had deceased before my grandfather was in a position of authority. No doubt he had, when he was the slave of his desk and quill, come late and gone early; but he had known the discipline. He was, finally, superannuated on a decent pension, and, in spite of a strange capriciousness, there was in his work a solid background of experience.

I am not going to mock at the Victorians. At the best they had a sense of what is serious, a consciousness of direction; at the worst they gave to their

geniuses something against which they could rebel. To fight, even if one fights phantoms, is better than to drift in unregarded ease. ✓ I would submit that much of the indefinable charm of Charles Lamb's work, much of its keen spiritual insight, much of its grasp of the beauty that is inherent in things, not tagged on to them, is due to the fact that his real work—his *opus*—was performed in a full consciousness of the difficulty, the dreariness, the willed acceptance of *labor*. It is only the disciplined man who can understand and impart the spirit of freedom; there are no holidays for the idle, and no leisure for the lazy. Just as duty, inspired by love, gave Charles Lamb that vision of reality which is expressed in all his best work; just as the loneliness of a man, who has gained sanity through a sight of its opposite, made it possible for Lamb to be the most companionable of mortals, so discipline, the chains and handcuffs of work neither congenial nor of obvious immediate spiritual profit, served to put Charles Lamb into his indisputable position as the freest, the most lovely libertine of letters, an author whose least successful caprice makes Laurence Sterne's fantasies of freedom move in a cold and formal pattern of deliberation.

II.

The author of a recent book has declared that "Charles Lamb is the ordinary man *in excelsis*", and that he "exactly conforms to the ordinary man's romantic idea of the Ordinary Man". Whether by that judgment the author has written himself down as "an ordinary man" with romantic ideas about

his status, or whether he has contributed anything to our understanding of 'Elia', I must not presume to determine. It is not for us to decide what the ordinary man will be when he is exalted to celestial conditions, though we may without risk guess that there will be little of romance in that high region. Nor can I imagine any author of any time to whom the epithet romantic, however far removed, is less applicable than it is to Lamb. Scott and Byron are, in their different ways, the great romantics of that age, artists, that is, in whom fancy becomes fantasy and imagination fancy; there is a kind of romance in Coleridge, but to Coleridge the line between the dream and the real continually shifted, and his romance is of and in him, not made by him. Shelley is the pure idealist; and Lamb is, as I have said, with Keats, one who knows that the real is patterned by the imagination. It is an impertinence to name oneself with Lamb; yet I am sure that, were he asked, Lamb would profess himself as ignorant as I am of what an ordinary man is; or whether indeed any such wild fowl can be found outside the world of those who, like Thomas Carlyle, can confidently indict not a nation, but the population of this whirling globe.

An ordinary man.

Born in poverty. Schooled by charity. In a madhouse before he is of age. Witness of his mother's death at her daughter's hand. Consecrated to drudgery. A man of "vast and desultory reading", as Bernard Barton says. Welcomed as equal and friend by the greatest men of his age. The critic who rediscovered the poetic drama. Who delighted in John Donne and Sir Thomas Browne. Who could

discuss theology with Coleridge, poetry with Wordsworth, religion with Barton, literature with Hazlitt, the theatre with Fanny Kelly, the world with Every Man.

An ordinary man.

His eyes, said Procter, "looked as if they could pick up pins and needles". And the same Procter tells us that

"when we were sauntering together on Pentonville Hill, and he noticed a great depression in me, which he attributed to want of money, he said, suddenly, in his stammering way, 'My dear boy, I—I have a quantity of useless things. I have now—in my desk, a—a hundred pounds—that I don't—don't know what to do with. Take it'".

"Useless things." I am sure we all know hundreds of ordinary men who refer in that way to a hundred, or five hundred pounds.

I think we may safely conclude that "an ordinary man *in excelsis*" is only a professorial periphrasis for an extraordinary man; or perhaps "a romantic idea of an ordinary man" is nothing but an alternative to "an ordinary man who never behaves in an ordinary way". For that was what upset Carlyle. By his Ecclefechan standards Lamb had no conduct; he was a perfectly natural human being, which was why he struck Calvinistic Tammas as a "being screwed into frosty artificialities, ghastly make-belief of wit", and without "real jocosity, humour, or geniality". It never occurred to Carlyle that he had not at his service the kind of rule which could measure Charles Lamb. Lamb did not behave; he was; ✓ and Carlyle's genius was for observing behaviour, not

for estimating character. And the final difference between them, an insuperable barrier, is this : Carlyle, more than most picturesque historians of the past, whether immediate or remote, was firmly rooted in his own time ; Lamb was foot-loose in the past, the present and eternity. Carlyle could preach of the eternities as something to which he scolded man to aspire ; Lamb lived there, and knew, unless you lived there, here and now, you would never escalate those plain frontiers. It is no accident of taste that, of the critics of his day, Lamb is almost alone in his appreciation of William Blake.

THE INFLUENCE OF JURISPRUDENCE ON ENGLISH THOUGHT.

BY PROFESSOR J. E. G. DE MONTMORENCY, F.R.S.L.

[Read December 7th, 1932.]

THE difficulties of my subject are perhaps the only clear thing about it. I have to define jurisprudence, which is a hard matter, and I need to define English thought, which is harder. If I were speaking to an assembly of lawyers I would define English thought and let jurisprudence speak for itself. If I were speaking to an assembly of philosophers I would define jurisprudence and let English thought speak for itself. But I am speaking to the Royal Society of Literature, a Society which dwells around the green well of English undefiled, and looks on words and collocations of words not as indifferent machinery for the dissemination of ideas or want of ideas, the pseudo-symbols of man's technical struggle with the unknown, but as things essentially representing truth, but not truisms, and beauty but not artificiality. In these dreadful circumstances I am constrained to put off the advocate's robe, and to define English thought as an age-long effort of a specific

people to reach truth, and jurisprudence as the age-long effort of all mankind to link truth and justice in the relations springing from human affairs. Truth is an abstract thing, buried in the bosom of the Begetter of the Universe. Thinkers of all nations are and always have been striving to devise some avenues of approach, and we see their efforts written in immortal books of prose and poetry, the avenues of, say, Plato, Aristotle and Euripides, of Cicero, of Dante, of Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton, of Francis Bacon, Newton, Descartes and Hobbes, of Berkeley, Kant, Goethe, Fichte and Browning.

The English thinkers, whether in prose or poetry, despite the heterogeneous heredity of a mixed race, have special features which distinguish them from the rest of the thinking world. They rely comparatively little on logic in the search for ultimate truth ; they represent revolt, but at the same time a commonplace conservative estimate of things, and they have the advantage of a continuous tradition in thought, in literature and in intellectual values. The influence of jurisprudence on English thought is a very definite thing, and specially so in view of the fact of a continuous tradition for at any rate eight centuries in both thought and literature, intellectual values and jurisprudence.

Jurisprudence represents, indeed, a world effort to control sections of society within certain limits, and within those limits to arrange an order of society which is respected beyond those limits. The history of jurisprudence is in reality the history of customary law. Nor is it possible to divorce either subject from the history of natural religion, whatever view

we take of what I may call absolute religion. We see man emerging from the beast, and the conscious reign of law taking the place of the subconscious reign of the orderliness which operates in the relations of both inorganic and organic matter, and in the adaptation of living matter to the conditions best suited to the development of life forms. We see the conscious reign of law in the most elementary tribal systems, and are justified in regarding the whole process of the Universe in Richard Hooker's pregnant phrase, "the obedience of creatures unto the law of Nature is the stay of the whole world". It is not the question of the argument from design, but of that argument from value upon which the late Lord Balfour based his definite belief in God. That is the basis of jurisprudence. In the case of all tribal systems in all parts of the world we have a definite jurisprudence, a system of customary law which has moral, aesthetic and ethical values, ever increasing values which are inexplicable unless we premise God, in Lord Balfour's words, as the condition of scientific knowledge.

This doctrine of values has a particular application to the English people, not because they are, man for man, better than other peoples, but because they have had opportunities denied to other races to put the doctrine to the severest test. I know that even to-day, despite the efforts of the British Broadcasting Corporation, the powerful activities of the motor car and the benign influence of the printing press, despite the new knowledge which is so very old, that we—I mean English and Welsh, Irish and Scotch—are insistently insular. In fact, though insularity is a

term of social and scientific abuse, it is and has always been our chief and only safeguard, and through us the safeguard of the world. Up to January, 1926, when there came into force the Law of Property Act and other precise statutes which show the intelligence of our Parliament, there were in existence more than 130 different systems of Customary Land Law in the southern portion of our tiny island. These systems of law actually marked the successive invasion of our island by foreign tribes from immensely prehistoric times. In some of those customs matriarchy was a plainly marked characteristic, which may have come amongst us some 8000 years ago. When I hear an enthusiastic married lady boasting of the privileges that the Married Women's Property Act 1882 conferred upon her down-trodden status, I sometimes think with a sigh about the Amazons who settled upon our shores so very long ago.

Each of these tribes—paleolithic, neolithic, tribes of the Copper Age, the Bronze Age, the Early Iron Age, the Brythonic tribes, the tribes Goidelic, the Aryan tribes—had their own customs. The arrival of the Romans is the first event of universal island importance because it gave the idea of a universal rule of law, a rule that was consistent with the existence of local customs. We owe much to Italy. The arrival of Jutes and Saxons, Danes and Normans added to the population and local customary law, but they did not disturb the prevalence of local law, though they at last imposed on the local law an overruling jurisprudence. For almost eight hundred years that overruling jurisprudence has been in full force: it is known to history as the Common Law

of England, an amazing product of the efforts of great Norman kings and great Italo-Norman jurists.

It was Italy that made Englishmen into a race and into a race of thinkers. It was through Italian jurisprudence that this miracle was accomplished. Italy was desolate as a kingdom or an empire, Germany was in the grasp of an empire that was neither Holy nor Roman, France was a desolation of conflicting jurisdictions when the revival of Roman law was taking place at the hands of Johnnessius and the Glossators who ended with Accursius at Bologna. A great master of Roman law came to England, and Oxford, Master Vacarius, in 1149, and the names of those famous lawyers Glanvil and Bracton spring at once to the mind, but not sooner than the earlier Lanfranc and Anselm, perhaps the fathers of English philosophic thought and English law, though we must not forget that Alcuin the Englishman and John Scotus the Irishman of Spanish origin had long before brought their Roman learning to bear on Germany and France. But I am speaking about English thought and English law. The Italo-Norman Roman lawyers, men from the schools of Pavia, Bologna, Bec, Caen and Laon, not only moulded the English Common Law, but gave us the great theologian philosopher and statesman who announced as his watchword *Credo ut intelligam*, and foreshadowed the belief of Hegel that rationality and reality are one. That is, for me, the beginning of things so far as England is concerned. English thought and English jurisprudence sprang from the same source of thought at the same time, and

announced the same message, that the rule of law is all-prevailing.

At this very time France was in a turmoil of customary law. In the south a form of Roman law obtained, while in the north innumerable forms of feudal custom were in force, and the *lex Salica*, besides a long series of capitularies, had been added to the vast complexity of legal chaos. The States General from the time of Phillippe le Bel in 1301 could have reformed the law, but shrank from the task. In 1453 reform began under Charles VII, but provincial spirit was stronger than centralized Government, and the different areas merely reformed and codified their local laws. It was not until Napoleon the Great took the matter in hand that France at last obtained, in the form of a Code of Common Law for which she had always longed, the functional and indestructible relationship of liberty, property and the family. What is true of France is true of Germany and Italy and Spain. Legal chaos on the Continent was everywhere evident till the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. England alone had obtained her Common Law in the early medieval times. She has a direct tradition, not local at all, but centred at Westminster, of a jurisprudence which gave free play within local limits to the tribal traditions of a people that never forgets. That tradition is eight centuries old, and coincides with the introduction into our island of facilities for thought which Anselm and Roger Bacon, from the respective points of view of philosophy and science, built up into specifically English thought, that empirical thought which has made us what we are, an insular people governing, directly or indirectly,

half the world, and giving hope and help to the other half. I speak in no boastful spirit. Every right-minded Englishman is unconscious of, or ashamed of, that measure of success which has accompanied our combination of jurisprudence and thought.

Even the immortal Jeremy Bentham besought America to shut her ports against the intrusion of the English Common Law as it were the plague, and his best known work is a translation into English of notes written in French by the unhappy and worshipful Dumont, though Bentham's own English prose was impeccable and he was the prophet of the England that was to be. So I confine myself to facts, however unpleasant.

I have mentioned Anselm, sometime Archbishop of Canterbury, and Roger Bacon, sometime ornament of the University of Oxford, for a specific purpose. The latter is referred to not because of his prophecy as to the use of flying-machines, an utterance according to the latest political thought which would have fully justified his otherwise ruthless committal to prison—but because of his onslaught on the medieval neo-Aristotelian school, and of his belief that intellectual advance could only be achieved by a return to the investigation of the natural world. In a moment I will make clear the importance of this belief to the subject of my lecture. I refer to Anselm because he was the first of modern philosophers long before he became absorbed in the controversies and useless medieval neo-Aristoteleanism, the conflicts of pure logic unrelated to facts. He was a realist when he came to those combats and opposed nominalism whose main resource was logic. But the

Anselm that I am thinking of was the Anselm who thought about thought. Reginald Lane Poole says of him* :

“ Unlike Lanfranc, he belongs also to the far future : as a philosopher, he is in at least one notable train of reasoning the parent of Descartes. His serene vision overlooks the chasm of scholasticism ; he is not engulfed in it. Some of the questions on which he meditated are so alien from the temper of his time that one cannot but ask whence he derived the impulse. To this question, however, no answer has yet been given, and for the present we may still believe that the idea of constructing an argument for the existence of God originated in his solitary thought. At first indeed Plato, through the channel of saint Augustin, supplied him with the suggestion that the existence of relative good upon earth implies the existence of an absolute Good of which it is a reflexion. To this purpose he wrote the ‘ Monologion ’. But he was not content until he had perfected an argument the profoundness of which might, he felt, appeal to every reasonable man. Such he discovered in the famous ‘ ontological ’ argument of the ‘ Proslogion ’, that the existence of God is proved by our thought of him. It is the very subtilty of the conception that makes the reasoning silent to mere logicians ; but among philosophers he has commanded a widespread sympathy. Anselm’s confidence in its truth has been justified by the manner in which his argument has been woven and re-woven into the systems of modern thought.”

Dr. Tennant in his interesting *Tarner Lectures* for 1931–1932 holds that the belief of John Scotus in the unity of all knowledge, which was still held by Abailard, began to break down with Anselm. But that was the Anselm who was driven to take sides in

* ‘ *Illustrations of the History of Medieval Thought and Learning*,’ second edition, revised 1920, pp. 91, 92.

the controversy between the realists and the nominalists. The true Anselm was the man described by R. L. Poole, a man who thought along the lines begun by John Scotus, lines which found their completion, as Dr. Alexander says, in Hegel. Anselm succeeded Lanfranc as Archbishop in 1093. Lanfranc was a great lawyer and a great statesman who served England for nineteen years until his death in 1093. "Best of all the advisers of the Great William," says Professor G. B. Adams, "he was equally with him the Conqueror of England, in that conquest of laws and civilization which followed the mere conquest of arms". He founded what may be called the Italian tradition, the Roman tradition, in law. Lanfranc and Anselm are the twin forces that give primary importance to my theme, the influence of jurisprudence on English thought.

I have spent some time upon these basic names for a special reason. I do not propose to deal with the influence of Vacarius, of Bracton, of Glanvil and other famous medieval lawyers on the thought of the English race, nor indeed of the influence of the author of the 'De Monarchia' on the statesman and poet Geoffrey Chaucer, though the influence of Dante Alighieri is not altogether remote from my subject. I have another purpose. I have laid great stress on the philosophic thought of Anselm, on the legal thought of Lanfranc, on the return to nature as a medium of advance by Roger Bacon, because I see in them all that belief in the oneness of truth, whatever truth there be, which became manifest in the legal and philosophic writings of a man who dismissed from both fields all scholastic and neo-Aristotelian logical

fancies and, whether as a lawyer or a philosopher, influenced. and still influences, the course of jurisprudence and the course of philosophy, and brought to bear his unique and practical knowledge of law into not only English, but world thought. I refer to Francis Bacon, Lord Verulam and Viscount St. Albans, sometime Lord Chancellor of England, and known to fame among those who have never seen an English Law Court by his works 'The Dignity and Advancement of Learning' and the 'Novum Organum'.

Born in 1561, the son of the Lord Keeper Sir Nicholas Bacon, and a cousin of Robert Cecil, the good Earl of Salisbury, he died in 1626 in retirement at Gray's Inn after the disastrous end, in 1621, of his political and legal career. He was a master of all law, whether Roman, French, Scottish or English, and in his great speeches at the English Bar he showed himself so great an orator that Ben Jonson, no mean judge, said of one of his speeches after listening to him for two or more hours, "the fear of every man that heard him was that he should make an end". At the Bar in 1594 in Chadleigh's case he totally destroyed the false metaphysics that were of legal importance from medieval times. In his works 'The Preparation for the Union of the Laws of England and Scotland' and the 'Maxims of the Law' he showed the unity of all law, all jurisprudence, and grasped the fact that there is a philosophy of law which lies at the basis of all philosophic thought. He was the statesman who from 1587 to 1618, at the Bar and on the Bench, laid down the constitutional rules as to the limitations of the authority of the

Crown which it was the privilege of the later seventeenth century to enshrine in the Statute Book. He was a man whose literary qualities lie at everyone's hand in his exquisite 'Essays' and the 'New Atlantis'. He was a historian who set the style of the best modern history and the best modern historians in his 'Life of Henry VII'. But beyond all these achievements there were, and are, his philosophic writings. Dr. Alexander says of Francis Bacon, "there is scarcely a line of thought which does not, indirectly at least, lead back to him". He, like John Scotus and Anselm, believed in the unity of all truth, and taught the greatest of modern philosophers, men like Hegel, the fact that the mystery of the Universe does not depend upon logic but upon truth, discovered, as Roger Bacon believed, by intense application to the world that we see around us. Roger Bacon never discovered the secret of investigation. That was beyond him. Francis Bacon was the father of a new method: that exact outward truth must be based upon observation and the results combined, in inductive fashion to provide general principles or laws—the Newtonian and the Mendelian laws are the great exemplars—which will solve all problems relating to the visible universe so far as it consists of facts of outward experience. Perhaps to-day we can extend the principle of induction to mental and spiritual phenomena, but that inquiry would take me past my actual purpose. The question I am asking for the moment is, where did Francis Bacon the philosopher and the lawyer derive this realistic and universally accepted theory of induction?

I have recently put forward an explanation of the material from which Bacon derived the doctrine. France was a field for the comparative study of laws in the late sixteenth century. Men like Dumoulin, Bernard d'Argentré, Guy Coquille, le Caron, René Chopu, had been working hard for the latter part of a century to rationalize the customary laws of France, to find out the principles of these laws and then to fix the practice in the Courts. It was a terrific business, as anyone who knows the works of these and other sixteenth century French authors must admit. Charles VII in 1453 gave the lawyers an opportunity to achieve what is known in the history of French law as the process of redaction. That process was one in which the innumerable facts of customary law were ascertained, and then from those facts general principles were laid down by an unconscious logical process of induction especially suited to the French mind. Now Francis Bacon was in Paris for three years learning diplomacy in the English Embassy of Sir Amias Paulet from 1576 to 1579, about the time when the customs of Paris were at last being redacted and applied to actual court work. Bacon mixed with these great lawyers. Guy Coquille, his friend, was a master of Italian jurisprudence. Louis le Caron was a philosopher of exactly Bacon's type. They all were humanists as well as lawyers. They all combined—and we must not forget the great name of Grotius—thought, literature and jurisprudence. They all were applying quite unconsciously the method of induction. I am convinced that it was in Paris in the company of these great humanistic lawyers that Bacon first formulated

from the huge mass of legal material which was being dealt with by the various Commissions his doctrine of realism or empiricism, that is to say, the doctrine of induction from ascertained or experimental facts, which is at the basis of his philosophic work. The French material was confirmed later by his vast practice at the English Bar, and he threw the doctrine into general philosophic form in his great book, 'The Dignity and Advancement of Learning', published in 1605, two years before he became Solicitor-General. In 1620 when he was Lord Chancellor he published his 'Novum Organum', the completion and full statement of his great philosophical treatise.

I have dealt at some length with the work of Francis Bacon because it illustrates in a special fashion the influence of jurisprudence upon English thought, but it must not be supposed that this influence ends with Bacon. In a sense it begins with Bacon, since he combined in his personality jurisprudence, literature and thought. I am only proposing to mention briefly three of the successors of Bacon since those names complete my argument, and we can infer the existence of the multitude of English lawyers who were thinkers and thinkers who were lawyers in the three centuries since Bacon's death.

The first two names are John Selden and Thomas Hobbes. John Selden was born on December 16th, 1584, in Sussex and died at Whitefriars on November 30th, 1654. He was an Oxford man and a member of the Inner Temple. His superb intellect rapidly gained him a continental reputation. Hugo Grotius, with whom he fought on equal terms, Grotius, that

miracle of continental law and letters, called him "the glory of the English nation". The motto of his life was written at large in all his books, *περί παντός την ἐλευθερίαν*, "Above all things Liberty", and Antony Wood says that he meant by this that he would examine all things and take nothing upon trust. He was a friend of Bacon, and adopted his line of thought, and he was a close friend of Hobbes, and the fights that they had together would have been worth recording. Sir Matthew Hale told Richard Baxter that "Mr. Selden was a resolved serious Christian; and that he was a great adversary to Hobbes his errors; and that he had seen him openly oppose him so earnestly, as either to depart from him or drive him out of the room". Only a friend could do that, and they were great friends. Hobbes with his eternal pipe of tobacco could be very irritating and could talk and write a great deal of nonsense, as the Royal Society knew, but the loss of the history of these battles between these great men is a loss to literature. Selden was the *arbiter elegantiae* of seventeenth century London, and he spent some of the fortune that he accumulated at the Bar and from his innumerable books in keeping at his great house at Whitefriars a plentiful table to entertain a ceaseless flow of learned company. He refused the Lord Chancellorship, he was elected Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, but refused the office, and it was only with great difficulty that he was persuaded to become a Bencher of the Inner Temple. He had no ambition but, as in duty bound, he sat in Parliament, the second, third and fourth Parliaments—the Long Parliament of 1640 in which he represented the

University of Oxford—played a part in the preparation of the Petition of Right, for which he was imprisoned, and was active in his legislative duties. His ‘Table-Talk’ is famous. Edited thirty-nine years after his death by the Rev. Richard Milward, it represents his sayings between the years 1634 to 1654. Lord Clarendon, writing about twenty years after Selden’s death, says of him: “Mr. Selden was a person whom no character can flatter, or transmit in any expressions equal to his Merit and Virtue; he was of so stupendous learning in all kinds, and in all languages (as may appear in his excellent and transcendent writings), that a man would have thought that he had been entirely conversant among books, and had never spent an hour but in reading and writing; yet his humanity, courtesy and affability was such, that he would have been thought to have been bred in the great Court, but that his good nature, charity and delight in doing good, and in communicating all he knew, exceeded that breeding.”

Such a paragon of letters and of jurisprudence is a fit subject for study, and it so happens that from the point of view of a jurist he took the philosophic line that fits in with the development of modern thought. Indeed as an historian and as a jurist he was a modern English thinker in the best sense. He did not rely on logic, but on facts. I must not quote the ‘Table-Talk’ for the plain reason that if I were to begin I should never stop, but two brief extracts will show that Selden was in the line of John Scotus, of Anselm, Bacon, Hobbes and Hegel, the line that believed in the unity of all truth. He says :

“I cannot fancy to myself what the Law of Nature means but the Law of God. How should I know that I ought not to steal, I ought not to commit Adultery, unless somebody had told me so. . . . There is something about me that tells me *fides est servanda*.”

This “something” of which Selden speaks, the compulsion that good faith must be observed, is the thing that reconciles morals and law, so when Selden talks of the Law of Nature he is saying what Anselm said : *Credo ut intelligam*. Another phrase of his, and I will turn for a brief space to his friend Hobbes : “When men comfort themselves with Philosophy, ’tis not because they have got two or three sentences, but because they have digested those sentences and made them their own.” How many of us can say this : the nominalist is very much alive to-day. Thomas Hobbes was born in Wiltshire in 1588, and he died nearly a century later on December 4th, 1679. He was an Oxford man, of Magdalen, and became the friend of William Cavendish, the second Duke of Devonshire, and the Cavendish family sheltered him to the end of his long life. He became at one time the amanuensis of Francis Bacon, and was on intimate terms with him and with Selden. He became a profound lawyer and jurist, though he was never called to the Bar. In 1640 he completed his treatise on ‘The Elements of Law, Natural and Political’. In 1641 he finished his book ‘De Cive’, containing his theories on politics and religion. He spent eleven years in Paris, from 1640 to 1651, and there he composed his immortal ‘Leviathan’. In his latter years his fame was immense on both sides of the Channel, and he was

both idolized and attacked. The acuteness and pungency of his mind and the brilliancy of his philosophical thought were never in question. He set England thinking. Indeed he set Europe thinking. Leslie Stephens says of him: "He shared in the general repudiation of scholasticism . . . he was scarcely influenced by Bacon's theory of the importance of systematic induction and experiment. He conceived of a general scientific scheme of universal knowledge deducible by geometrical methods from the motions of matter which he assumed to be the ultimate fact." I do agree that Hobbes was not influenced by Bacon's philosophy. He could not have arrived at his scheme of universal knowledge without admitting the philosophy of induction. Hobbes in fact reduced all authority to a Divine source. The first and fundamental law of Nature was to Hobbes "to seek peace and follow", but this was followed by what he calls "the sum of the right of Nature", namely, "by all means we can to defend ourselves". "The greater sum of Good" is always to be aimed at. "Justice . . . is a rule of reason, by which we are forbidden to do anything destructive to our life; and consequently a law of Nature". Hobbes conceives an original "state of war", but it is not necessary to his argument, although it landed him with one of the perpetual logomachies which he loved. He refers back the laws of Nature to a religious and external force, but he brilliantly inverts the argument from design. In that argument we infer God from the laws of Nature, an argument which has been long abandoned in favour of the argument from design. But Hobbes did not adopt the argument

from design. He adopts instead Anselm's conception and refers the laws of Nature to God as an intuitive conception. The very nature of thought implies the existence of God—the Hegelian position.

I must not tarry to discuss the multitude of problems that circle round both Hobbes and indeed Locke as spiritual descendants of Bacon. I am content to put my point : the extraordinary influence that jurisprudence, even in the case of a non-professional lawyer, had on English thought. I must leave Bentham severely alone with the comment that perhaps he was as great a thinker and master of English as Bacon, and that the England of to-day owes practically all of her advances in social laws to his amazing prevision of the needs of a modern community. He too visualized the oneness of all knowledge and he, in his curious way, repudiated the weaknesses which the common law of England had accumulated in the seven centuries of her history.

There is one name which I must, however, briefly mention, that of the great legal thinker, Sir Henry Sumner Maine, who, plunging into the fray of things when the ideas of Darwin were puzzling the Victorian world, gave a new access of light from jurisprudence to English thought, a beam of light which sprang from original research into customary law, contained in his 'Ancient Law', published in 1861, and in subsequent famous treatises. He says (one quotation must suffice)* : "The great principle which underlies all our knowledge of the physical world, that nature is ever consistent with herself, must also be true of human nature and of human society, which is made

* 'Village Communities,' third edition, p. 250.

up of human nature. It is not indeed meant that there are no truths except of the external world, but that all truth, of whatever character, must conform with the same conditions ; so that, if indeed history be true, it must teach that which every other science teaches, continuous sequence, inflexible order and eternal law."

These few sentences, put in Maine's terse but charming style, are the right conclusion of my argument, and show that from the eleventh till the twentieth century there has been a continuity of thinking upon the nature of law, which has become the very essence of English thought as well as the explanation of that unthinking obedience to law which is part, and a main part, of the English character.

THE CONTRIBUTION OF A PROVINCIAL CENTRE (NORWICH) TO ENGLISH LETTERS.

BY R. H. MOTTRAM.

[Read November 29th, 1933.]

MANY years ago, when I was first sent abroad to learn the French language, I noticed among many other things that seemed strange to an English boy, the difference between the relationship of the French provinces to Paris, and the relationship of the English provinces to London. While I heard men say with a certain air : " Sir, I belong to Paris ", and women with unmistakable pride : " Moi, je suis Parisienne ", I had never heard any one in England proudly boast of belonging to London. If any one did admit to being a Londoner, he camouflaged it with some half apologetic remark about the Cockney.

I have never got over that early impression, and it has only deepened since I became concerned with literature. I fancy that it is even more true of letters than of life as a whole, that, although English literature could not exist to-day without London, and must always owe to London many of its outstanding characters, its tone and flavour are not dictated by London to the same extent that those of French literature are dictated by Paris.

Several reasons suggest themselves for this. There

is nothing in London comparable to the French Academy of Letters and the French subsidized National Theatre, both situate in Paris.

The nearest thing we have to a national theatre is at Stratford-on-Avon, and if we had an academy of letters, I should certainly expect it to be situated at Oxford or Cambridge, or Edinburgh, rather than London.

Yet all these matters seem unimportant to me beside the basic fact that England and France differ in the fundamentals on which their social life is based, and any live literature—both English and French literature are intensely alive—must correspond to the social system of which it is a part. Now the French social system is based on Liberty, Equality and Fraternity, in theory if not in practice, and I think that being based on any theory involves a degree of centralization. Hence the relatively high social and therefore literary importance of Paris. English society is not founded on anything at all. It has grown up, as everything in England has grown up, on a basis of convenience, dislike of change and a horror of violent change, a strong feeling for leisure and privacy, which means, if you trace it to its roots, a strong feeling for a bit of land of one's own, and domestic animals. That may sound odd in a country in which far fewer men than the average usual in European countries own any land at all. But I will maintain that it is so because the humbler Englishman thinks of the land just as the less humble one does, as a place where he enjoys the open air and space, where he has his sport, and rarely, like the humble man on the Continent, as his means of livelihood and

only source of wealth. I think this always was so, and I think that every development since feudal times has tended to emphasize it—colonization, seafaring, town industrialism, and the deep-seated snobbery which leaves us without any class content to remain where it is, as does the class which embraces the priest, the functionary, the peasant, and the concierge in other countries.

To sum up, I fancy that London is rather the meeting-place of the provinces, which contribute to compose its life and distinctive flavour, in contradistinction to Paris, which distributes as it were, a radiating culture, parallel with the authority it radiates to its departments, suggestively so named. If I am right the contributions of the provinces to English literature must be important, sustained and permanent, and it is time that I gave some tangible example to show that this is the case. For evidence on the other side is not lacking. The Augustans of the eighteenth century, the dramatists of the seventeenth, all lived in, and worked in London, and are not imaginable elsewhere. Dickens and Thackeray may be cited against my contention, and a considerable male, and a female coterie of about their date. I could produce, however, the great critical school of Edinburgh, the Lake Poets, more than one phase of the life of the older universities. But, on the principle of safety first I prefer to speak of that which I know best, the long, utterly informal, disconnected, but unfailing literary output of my native place, Norwich. I shall not even deviate into Norfolk and Suffolk, prolific as both have been. I am content with Norwich, for what could be more

provincial, both in the passing derogatory sense of the word, and also in the more permanent sense? Norwich is one, perhaps the best preserved, of the old provincial centres. It ranks with York and Chester, and Exeter. Even to-day it is the only town of its size for a hundred miles in any direction, and has always dominated the counties within its influence. It should, then, give just the testimony I need, and I think that it does. This consists of an unmistakable local influence. I doubt if even the presence of a Cathedral Close can be shown to have been the source of it, though in the eighteenth century it had some effect, as had also the very cultured dissenting circles of those days. My main point is that the literary characters I am going to cite owe something besides mere birth to Norwich, and nothing to any formal school there, just to the vague, unconscious feeling of locality, an almost geographical accident. I discard the poet Suckling, and the poet Earl of Surrey, though both are available, because they are too early. Essentially English literature had hardly crystallized out from its earlier ingredients then.

In tracing the provincial influence which Norwich has brought to bear on English letters, it is worthy of notice that there is no trace of a local school, rare as such things are in England, corresponding to the local school of painting. But I think I can indicate a certain very various, disconnected yet repeated local flavour, extending over many differing personalities during centuries. The first example I offer is that of Robert Greene. He, at least, there is no doubt, was born in Norwich, and significantly, I think, on one

of the many market places or fairsteads into which the organizing ability of the Plantagenet mercantile age had regimented the trade of the place. It was, to be precise, on Tombland—not connected with tombs, but the wasteland, Danish Thom-land—at the monastery gates that there lived a saddler, by name Greene, and his wife, and here their son was born in 1560. The boy must have seen the statutory fairs that were held under the shadow of the walls, and before the two great gates of the Cathedral Close, which still bound the open tree-planted space on its eastern side. On its west, certain old poke-bonnet gables surround the church of St. George, but it is uncertain under which the Greenes lived. The trade of saddler was then very prosperous, and the boy was sent to St. John's College, Cambridge, where he took his B.A. in 1578, and became M.A. in 1583, and M.A. of Oxford later. The set in which he moved certainly included Thomas Nashe and Gabriel Harvey, who seems to have known most about him, and may have traduced him. It is less certain, I gather, if he met Shakespeare and Marlowe—the allusion to a cock dressed in borrowed plumes, and the supposition that he supplied the plot for the 'Winter's Tale' are not, I believe, entirely authenticated, nor do I greatly mind. Greene seems to have gone in for the undergraduate life of his time, no less full of new ideas than that of to-day. It was perhaps more desperately Bohemian. He travelled abroad, and on his return, married and settled in Norwich, in 1585, but almost immediately drifted to London. He lived there seven years, dying in 1592 of a surfeit of pickled herrings and Rhenish wine.

We have a brief record of his appearance. He is said to have been dressed "after the habit of a scholar, like a gentleman. He had a jolly long red peak like the spire of a steeple, which he did cherish continually without cutting, whereat a man might hang a jewel it was so bright and pendant".

It must therefore be during this brief period that he accomplished his prodigious output of twenty-eight items. A great many of these are mere curiosities interesting to scholars. There are the moral pieces, 'A Notable Discovery of Cosenage', 'Coney Catching', 'A Looking Glass for London'. They culminate in the 'Repentance', said to have been written in his last hours, but regarded, I gather, by scholars, with some suspicion. These are chiefly important to me as showing the attitude of the young man from the provinces, who either was or pretended to be the prey of the much cleverer Londoner. There are plays of the bombastic rhetorical kind—'Orlando Furioso', 'Alphonsus, King of Aragon', 'King James IV', 'Pandosto', 'Permides', 'Alcida', full of the fantastic vitality of that wonderful time. But most of all there are the plays in which Greene helped at least to establish the character of the English buffoon: "Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay", the local names masking an interest in astrology, and "George à Greene". So, at least, I gather from scholars. The little local evidence I have seems to coincide with this opinion.

That I will venture to think is his real contribution and one which he was well qualified to make.

In complete contrast to Greene, I take for my next example the son who was born to the prosperous

merchant Browne of Cheapside, in 1605. I am glad he was not born in Norwich. It suits me better that after taking his Oxford B.A. in 1626, and being made a Doctor of Medicine of Oxford in 1631, and of Leyden in 1633, after travelling in Ireland, France, Italy and Holland, he settled, in 1637, in Norwich. The site of the house and of the garden where Evelyn found him tending his quincunxes is traceable. The splendid overmantel before which he sat was, until lately, in the neighbourhood. Best of all, the bells of St. Peter Mancroft, to which he used to listen, still ring their peal of twelve and a tenor. There began his long, and solidly splendid career, based, in utter contrast to Greene's fitful flare, on sheer integrity and worth. There he became the father of twelve children, four of them sons, and thence in 1642 was published the 'Religio Medici', of which I shall only quote one phrase to recall his essential quality :

"Multitude—that numerous piece of Monstrosity which, taken asunder, seem men and reasonable creatures of God, but which, confused together, make but one great beast and monstrosity more prodigious than Hydra."

He knew what he was talking about. An Anglican and Royalist, he had settled by deliberate choice in a district second to none, save possibly East Yorkshire, in its hundred-per-cent. Roundheadism. From it came many of the Regicide Committee, and a good number of those invincible Ironsides. In 1643, Newcastle fell before the Royal Force, and a contribution was called for to raise an army to regain it. Browne refused to participate, and I think it is eloquent testimony to the contemporary estimation in which he must have been held that he was in no

way molested. In 1646 appeared his 'Vulgar Errors : An Inquiry into many received tenets and commonly presumed truths, which examined, do prove but vulgar common errors'. In 1658 came 'Urn Burial'. In 1664 he went to Bury St. Edmunds to give medical evidence against two wretched women accused of witchcraft, with fatal results for them. In 1671, the King, whom he had never failed in loyalty, restored to the throne, made a splendid progress through Norfolk, and in St. Andrew's Hall, the great nave of the Blackfriars' Church, which Henry VIII had secularized, and the city still uses as its foremost place of assembly, Charles the Second knighted the ageing faithful subject. At length, in 1692, he died, full of years and honour, and after him was published his 'Christian Morals'.

What had all this to do with Norwich, apart from the fact that he lived there? Why, just that. In few other places could he have had such a house and garden in the middle of so large a town, with Bishop Hall, the English Seneca, whose palace is still preserved, for his patient, and for pupil, Dr. Power, who would not learn his medicine at Cambridge, "for there are so few helps, I fear I should make but a lingering progress". Such were the surroundings Browne chose, and such I feel gave him the environment he sought. The sequel is curious. To-day his statue stands in the Norwich Haymarket, beside St. Peter's Church, contemplating a skull. And well it may. His own, severed from his other remains for centuries, was only recently discovered in the Anatomical Museum of the Norwich and Norfolk Hospital, and restored to its proper place.

Further, if you will look in Kelly's Directory for the year 1929, you will find at No. 12, Orford Place, the site of his house, "Browne, Thomas, M.D." I believe this arose from the tablet which pious admirers have set up there.

I want a contrast, and none of the figures which adorn the cultivated circles of Georgian Norwich quite fill the place. There are Amelia Opie, beautiful, gifted woman, mistress of a non-scandalous salon, and Sarah Austin, with whom all the wits of the period conversed while she mended her little boy's trousers; there is John Taylor, with his Hebrew Lexicon subscribed for by English and Irish bishops; there is Mrs. Barbauld keeping school in Black Boys Yard. I shall bow politely to them all and pass into the year 1802, when one of the Martineaus, a family of religious refugees from the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, was living in the comely red brick house with a carriage entry beside it, which stands in one of the main streets of the city. This Martineau had not been there long, for his earlier home was just across the street in a yet older house, in a paved courtyard, which he had taken over from John Gurney, when the latter moved out to Earham—the Earham of Percy Lubbock, now owned by the city. Martineau's daughter Harriet was thus born in the same house as Elizabeth Gurney, who was to be known to the world as Mrs. Fry, enough honour, one would think, for any dwelling. Appropriate tablets record the fact.

Just across the road, in the new house, the physically sickly, but mentally robust, if over sensitive little girl grew up. She was the third of eight children, and as the constant warfare of the time

ruined her father's business, her prospects of a full and happy life were unusually poor, even in an age when middle-class girls had little before them but married or single domestic servitude. That Harriet triumphed over her circumstances is due to the great capacity which we may believe to be inherited, and to the high level of culture existing then, not only in the Cathedral Close, but among the Dissenting Meetings dominated by such families as the Gurneys and the Taylors.

She may have been ambitious too, for there is the well-known story of how she used to gaze up from the depth of the horse-box pew in the dark-oak-lined eight-sided Octagon Chapel that Wesley had found too ornate for the "coarse Gospel of Christ", and which still excites the admiration of architects in two continents—up at the sunlight slanting through the Dormers in the Italianate ceiling, thinking that by those rays the angels descended to the aid of little girls such as she.

Thus we find her trying her hand at essays, stories for Sunday school about Egypt and Palestine, to which she had never been. Finally, in her thirtieth year, she had become sufficiently well known as a devotee of the then fashionable economic science to be commissioned by Moxon, the publisher, to write a series of stories in which the powder of political economy was disguised by the jam of fiction. The subscription was only 300 copies, but in a week he sold 1500, and printed 5000. The phenomenon is familiar to anyone who has had to do with writing and publishing. Harriet had made the inexplicable but necessary lucky hit. She at once became a

celebrity with an income. Incidentally she forfeits most of our sympathy. In 1834 she went to America to explain to the citizens of the United States how to solve their various problems. Prosperity made her one of those English women still the wonder, the despair and the laughing-stock of other nations. In 1839, at Venice, she became ill. It was probably something that would now be diagnosed, removed, and almost forgotten in a few weeks. Then, she resigned herself to immediate death, arranged her affairs, and incidentally wrote what are to-day much the most readable of her considerable output, 'The Hour and the Man, a Biography of Toussaint l'Ouverture', and the 'Playfellow', a collection of stories. By 1844 she had discovered that she was not going to die, though she suffered much continually, and then it was that she was induced to try mesmerism, with blessed relief. This led to her forming a friendship with the young and handsome Mr. Atkinson the mesmerist. This attachment had strange results. In 1847 she made a public announcement that she had repudiated all theology, and in 1851 wrote with Atkinson the 'Letter on the Laws of Man's Nature and Destiny', which gave her a second and considerable reputation. In 1852 she condensed the works of Auguste Comte. From thenceforward, settled at her lakeland home, she held a court that was almost regal. Everyone who was gifted or celebrated came to build her rockery, cut her lawn, and tend her shrubs. We find it difficult now to discern the attraction she exercised, but there can be no doubt about it. She died in 1876, after nearly forty years' preparation, and the lament was national. I think

that, although she had not resided in Norwich for half a century, the conditions of her childhood and the fact of her descent from the stock of religious refugees Norwich had always welcomed, much to its advantage, justify one in classing her as an essentially local product.

She is also as complete a contrast as one could desire from the previous examples I have offered, and next to her I place one, who though her own brother, shared nothing with her but courage. James Martineau, two years younger than Harriet, was educated at Norwich Grammar School, and went to a theological college in 1822. In 1825 he published a treatise under the prophetic title 'The Necessity of Cultivating the Imagination as a Regulator of the Devotional Feelings'. In 1827 he was a co-pastor at Bristol, and in 1828 at Dublin, in which city of fiercely contested opinions he distinguished himself by appearing as the champion of—the Presbyterians, to whom he belonged? Not a bit!—of the Roman Catholics. In 1831 he transferred to Liverpool, where there raged for some time a terrific pulpit battle in the theological field. In 1836 he published his 'Rationale of Religious Inquiry'. In 1840 he was made Professor of Mental and Moral Philosophy. In 1845 he announced to a world then more apt to listen, that he had broken with Biblical Conservatism. In 1851, goaded by his sister's conversion, he wrote at length on Mesmeric Atheism. In 1859 he became Minister of Little Portland Street Chapel. In 1866 appeared 'Essays Philosophical and Theological'. In 1874 'Religion as Affected by Modern Materialism'. In 1876, 'Modern Materialism in its Attitude towards

Theology'. In 1879 'The Ideal Substitute for God Considered'. In 1881 'The Relation between Ethics and Religion'. In 1882 'A Study of Spinoza'. In 1885 'Types of Ethical Theory'. In 1888 'A Study of Religion'. In 1890, at the age of 85, 'The Seat of Authority in Religion'. He lived on until 1900, his faculties unimpaired, and still remembering the city in which he had been born, and from which he had set out on his more than European career. Anyone who looks at the portraits and statues of him—one of the former by G. F. Watts—cannot miss the lofty quality of that serene purposeful face. The age of saints may be gone, with the robes and aureoles they used to wear. A saint in a tail coat, whiskered, and full of debate is perhaps difficult to imagine. If not, then James Martineau was one, and perhaps the religious persecution of his ancestors made him so.

Having surveyed an Elizabethan, a seventeenth century philosopher, a nineteenth century woman writer, a theologian, can I find something distinct from all of them? I can! Again it is an instance of a writer who preferred Norwich.

In 1805, Lieutenant Borrow, on duty with his regiment, was quartered in a cottage still to be seen at Dumpling Green, a hamlet of the market town of East Dereham. Here his wife presented him with a son, who was christened George. The boy grew up amid the conditions of constantly shifting garrison duty of his father. The patches of autobiography that occur in 'Lavengro' tell us what his boyhood must have been, how he learned his Latin verbs with his feet dangling from a ledge of the rock of Edinburgh Castle. The fact remains that he spent his time as

an articled clerk in old Mr. Simpson's the lawyer's office in Norwich. Here Robert Southey, Poet Laureate, saw him, and on learning that the young man already spoke eleven languages, delivered himself of the remarkable opinion that he would go far. Southey was right; Borrow, I always feel, was the ideal colonist, a personality at its best when not in contact with its fellow humans. It is all the more remarkable, therefore, that he always returned to, and always liked Norwich, which was neither his birthplace nor the scene of his active life. His wanderings, his queer uncouth, one may almost say, non-social existence, colporting for the Bible Society, and consorting with those whom the more settled type of civilized, and above all, urban society, has never managed to contain, the gipsies, always brought him back to Norwich and its neighbourhood. In some queer way he felt himself at home there—odd as the word is applied to so essentially a homeless person as Borrow—in the house in Willow Lane, now owned by the city.

There are people alive who have spoken to him, and to his long-suffering wife. To one such she recounted this story in some such words as these :

“ George would sometimes say, ‘ My dear, I think I’ll go for a walk ! ’ And off he would go, and be away for months, and I never knew where he was. Then, one day, he would come back and say, ‘ My dear, I’ve had a nice walk ! ’ ”

Another concerns an even later period, when his housekeeper would be commanded :

“ This is washing day. Do you wait until our

neighbours have hung out their linen. Then you can light our copper and see if our blacks will improve their fulling."

On the other side of his queer character was that extraordinary gift, I think a trick of the eye that is really a painter's quality. It is not an accident that he early discovered and appreciated John Crome. He lived on until the 'eighties, not "dating" at all; how could he? And the one thing that everyone knows about him concerns the wind that blows on Mousehold Heath above the towers and pantiles, the tree-tops and wide meadows of Norwich.

Here they are then, my five examples, various, disconnected, bound by no theory or tradition except some indefinable quality that makes them centre round and take a certain flavour from a particular place. I call that a local contribution to English letters.

THE NOVEL : HAS IT A FUNCTION TO-DAY ?

BY BONAMY DOBRÉE.

[Read April 11th, 1934.]

THE word "novel" conjures up in the mind a huge, amorphous beast. Fiction, as we call it, connotes an art of no special form, such as the drama has, endowed with no unique vehicle such as poetry makes use of, or subject-matter proper to itself such as philosophy enjoys. The novel can take any conceivable shape ; it is hardly limited for size in the direction of either smallness or largeness ; it can deal with every human interest. There are novels that amuse, novels that edify, novels that aim at crystalizing life into art, novels that are brutally didactic. There appears, then, to be no realm, no form, no aim, of which we can say : This belongs peculiarly to the novel.

Yet our habit of mind rebels against this tame conclusion. There must surely be some reason, we say, besides the desire for distraction, why the novel should exist as a separate form of literature. We adapt Coleridge's phrase about poetry, and think that the novel must contain within itself the reason why it is so, and not otherwise ; or we are impelled to think that there is some special job that the novel alone can do, or at any rate do better than any other

form of literature. If this is so, it is obviously important to discover what it is, because the novel, as hardly anyone will deny, is the most powerful literary instrument of our time. The stage has fallen on evil days in which few people take it seriously ; poetry is read by a minute fraction of the public ; sermons no longer form the stout commercial standby of the great publishing houses ; even biography, however iconoclastic or romantic, does not really rival the novel, while the more expert departments are naturally small in bulk and influence. There are, we see then, numbers of talented writers, some of them men or women of genius, using this instrument of fiction. To do what ? It is more than interesting, it is imperative to ask the question, since the novel is clearly the most directive art-form of our day, the most widely used vehicle of enlightenment, by which many people arrive at their formative ideas of life.

It is necessary at the outset to guard against a possible misconception. There are, of course, a great many people who read novels as a way of escape from life ; no doubt we all do so at times, quite reasonably. Hundreds of books, romances, pastorals, detective stories, are written merely to provide this loophole ; and further, much of the novel-writing of to-day, as always, is good honest hack-work. I do not propose to talk about these books, though they may form the majority of those published, but about the considerable number written by people who follow a craft, who are artists, sometimes very considerable ones, using their best efforts to produce books for such people as expect to get nourishment from their reading.

There is one first general observation which strikes one about the mass of this literature to-day, which is that, leaving aside the small proportion of very good or very bad books, the level of writing, of handling of ideas and matter, is high. Novels to-day are for the most part better constructed, and often better written, than the average novel by, say, Bulwer Lytton or Disraeli. But another first general observation, which we can make in contradistinction with this, is that there seems to be no agreed conception of what the business of the novel is. I venture to suggest that all of us find ourselves again and again saying as we read a book, What is this really about ? What is this book for ? Is there any reason why it should have been written ? Such experiences force us to put ourselves the question, Has the novel any functional purpose to fulfil ? If so, what part does it, or ought it to play in a modern, organized, civilized community ? For if it is a serious art, as we suppose, it must have some special place in the scheme.

Looking back for a brief moment at the novel from Defoe until now, the picture in the past seems clear enough. Defoe, it appears plainly to us, was intent to show how the social structure made the individual what he was, and that what men or women became was largely a matter of chance. He was concerned with the *injustice* of social law. Fielding, who, as he said in the preface to 'Joseph Andrews', regarded the novel as a prose epic, painted society with satirical emphasis on hypocritical ideology ; and this in effect is what Thackeray also did. Richardson, too, painted society with a delicate psychological insight foreign

to Fielding ; he was concerned, we might say, with the *justice* of social law, but in a certain direction only, for he confined himself to a special aspect of society, to the incidence of one set of ideas ; just as Jane Austen, again, restricted herself to a certain narrow class, and the ideas proper to that class. Dickens presented life more fully, and dealt with the moral ideas that permeated society ; treating his work in a broad sense, we can say he was a descendant of Defoe. The point I would like to suggest, therefore, is that the novelists of chief account—leaving out Mrs. Radcliffe and that school—from Defoe down to George Eliot, even such an untraditional writer as Peacock, took society as their theme, though none of them, one would think, with such a clear intuition of what they were doing as Balzac had. They were all concerned, in one way or another, to make society look at itself. Two exceptions will at once spring to mind, but everyone will agree that they are unclassifiable among ordinary novels ; I mean ‘ Tristram Shandy ’ and ‘ Wuthering Heights ’, the one being pure comedy and the other pure tragedy, presented in a way that remains unparalleled in either kind up to the present day. Whereas the other novels I have indicated all tended to give their contemporary readers an attitude towards society, these two evoked, and still evoke, an attitude towards life, the one of comic, the other of tragic acceptance.

But, and here is the next point I would like to suggest, in the last century a change came over the novel ; it began—one speaks, of course, roughly, because it seems that it is always possible to trace beginnings back a little further—it began with

Meredith. The change was not immediately perceptible, because it was one of emphasis ; the elements were much the same as before, but it was the importance of the individual rather than of society that was stressed. This perhaps is all the more remarkable, as Meredith always protested that the business of comedy—and much of his best work ranks as comedy—was to enliven society's consciousness of itself, "to make life spin along more briskly". Yet when Meredith presents you with people, he strives to give you their essence as individuals ; his crude matter is still largely society, but society is not his mind-material, his theme. Perhaps he gives the clearest statement of his purpose when he says in 'Beauchamp's Career' :

"My people conquer nothing, win none ; they are actual yet uncommon. It is the clockwork of the brain that they are directed to set in motion, and—poor troop of actors to vacant benches—the conscience residing in thoughtfulness which they would appeal to."

Meredith's object, we see, was to keep the mind attentive to his people as such ; it was they, not the social scheme, who were to set in motion the clockwork of the brain, and the conscience residing in thoughtfulness. One would not for a moment claim that he ignored society, or glozed over its value, but his real concern was with the vital moral struggles of his people, people determined to act well from clear motives in spite of convention. Tom Jones had no moral problems ; Clarissa knew exactly what was right and wrong ; but the interest of Meredith's

characters, of Beauchamp, of Clara Middleton, of twenty others, lies precisely in their discovery of what is right for themselves. Hardy carried the process still further. With him the emphasis is still more heavily on the individual ; for him society, though he works within its moulds, exists mainly as a part of inexorable Fate, the fate that made and marred Henchard, that drove the people in ' Tess ' to miserable ends. Society meant little to Hardy as the expression of humanity, its desires or will. But it is perhaps when we come to Mr. E. M. Forster that we get the clearest view of how radically the novel had changed its object of pursuit. For him society, with its beliefs and customs, its dogmas and fetishes, exists only as a background ; what he is concerned with is the personal relation. For him the novel is not to act as a critic of society by making it regard itself, but, as he suggested at the end of his brilliant ' Aspects of the Novel ', to change people by making them look at themselves, and at each other, in a new way.

But even with Mr. Forster we have not come to an end of the non-social process. To deal with the personal relation supposes at least two people ; the further development is to induce the individual to look at his relation with himself. It was that which became, almost logically, the point of interest. Here, for example, is D. H. Lawrence on the subject :

" It is the way our sympathy flows and recoils that really determines our lives. And here lies the vast importance of the novel, properly handled. It can inform and lead into new places the flow of our sympathetic consciousness, and it can lead our sympathy away in recoil from things gone dead.

Therefore the novel, properly handled, can reveal the most secret places of life ; for it is in the *passional* secret places of life, above all, that the tide of sensitive awareness needs to ebb and flow, cleansing and freshening."

That is an illuminating statement ; the tide of sensitive awareness is to be the novelist's subject, to increase it to be his object. Mrs. Woolf has much the same purpose ; what else can explain what we are told about Mrs. Dalloway, or the persons in ' The Waves ' ? She has, indeed, declared that for the modern novelist the interest lies " in the dark places of psychology ". That this is also Mr. James Joyce's notion is borne out by that bold masterpiece ' Ulysses ', where, as Mrs. Woolf (significantly) has said, " he is concerned at all costs to reveal the flickering of that innermost flame which flashes its message through the brain." He continues this pursuit in the sub-conscious or dream state in ' Fragments of a Work in Progress '.

Let me now go a step further. What is it that the novelist, whatever his aim may seem to be, is really doing ? His object is, as Henry James argued, to *present reality*. In short, whatever his epoch, his inescapable task is to place before us what he considers to be the most important reality. If I have not been wrong in my rough analysis, the main concern of the novelists of the last two hundred years tallies very well with what seems to have been the general apprehension of what the most important reality was in the various epochs of those two centuries. What subject could be more fitting for the eighteenth century, with its glorification of the social virtues, than society as a whole ? What would we expect

from the individualism of the Victorian age but insistence upon the unique validity of the personality? In the Edwardian era it began to be felt that individualism was not enough; it laid too much stress on the isolation of the human being, which something in the human being itself rebels against. Religion, love, pity, many of the profoundest emotions known to us, urge us all the while to batter down the barriers of the ego. So just when the desire for a less ego-centric view began to emerge, Mr. Forster voiced the sense of the prime value of the personal relation. His novels, just as much as those of his predecessors, were functional; they responded to a social need.

But what happened then? The chaos of the war, reinforced by the fruitful and tempting discoveries of psycho-analysis, made it seem that the most important thing people could do was to discover themselves, find out how their minds and their emotions worked, and so, again as a function of the general desire, we get the novels of Mrs. Woolf and Mr. Joyce. In these society, in the old meaning of the word, practically disappears. In a sense, it had to disappear, for what was society? The older novelists could rely on obtaining a definite reaction to the issues they raised: Fielding knew what people would think about Tom Jones's adventures; Richardson could count on what his readers would feel about Clarissa. There was, in fact, a definite social, that is to say, moral background, as there was for novelists down to Mr. Forster. But with the war this background disintegrated, and there was none upon which the novelist could rely. The gyration of values was such that only by discarding values as far as possible

could the novelist present realities at all ; or perhaps it would be truer to say that the hotch-potch of values was the reality. At all events, there being no settled picture available, no common reaction to be counted upon, he was forced to rely on the individual consciousness, the isolated conscience ; for his only hope of being read lay in his throwing overboard all general values.

This was a result which involved certain consequences, the main one being that the novel drifted from its main current. Many novels now seem to invade the realm of poetry ; and one can seriously ask whether ' *The Waves* ' and ' *Anna Livia Plurabelle* ', for example, do not produce their effect in us far more by means which we recognize as being poetic, than by those we are familiar with in the novel, which plunges us into imagined actualities to partake vicariously in physical or moral struggles. And if we are to believe Mrs. Woolf, the whole substance of the novelistic material is to be changed :

" Life [she writes] is not a series of gig-lamps symmetrically arranged ; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end. Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration and complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible ? "

One's first impulse on reading this is to ask in reply whether that is not precisely the function of poetry ? Not that one would wish to see an art limited by any dogmatic pronouncement as to its realm ; but what one has to consider is whether an art is not weakened

by trying to accomplish something for which it is not peculiarly fitted.

We have so far pursued the track which the inventors, the original minds, among novelists have taken. These have departed from the old tradition, but their work will influence, has indeed already influenced, work written on the old basis. But my subject to-day is, rather, the traditional novel dealing with society, the kind of novel as written from Trollope to Galsworthy, and beyond, the novel which has society as its material and its theme. It is the business of the novel of this kind—eighty per cent., shall we say, of the competent, respectable novels that we read—to deal with human beings in the mass, to illuminate the actions and interactions of people with each other within the framework of contemporary morals. It is in this way that the novel is functional. Thus the responsibility of the novelist is enormous. He is to reveal to society what it is doing, why it is doing it, and, perhaps, indicate the path along which it should, or might advantageously go.

But if we look, in bulk, at what I have called the “traditional” novel of to-day, it is forced upon us that it has ceased to do its job. I can only speak of a general, but deep impression it makes on myself; to prove such a statement, and others that I shall make, would need exhaustive analysis and a bundle of intolerable statistics. I must take it that my experience is the average one. For what are the things of importance at the moment, what is the urgent reality? The most important thing, as always, is belief, or, if you prefer, our attitude towards life, for without entering here into the vexed question of the

relation of belief to art, I can only express my conviction that where there is no belief there can be no good art ; it is the scaffolding about which the artist constructs his symbols. And the materials upon which the novelist exercises his belief are the thoughts which occupy or agitate the mass of his fellows, or else the important problem of his day. At the moment, I suggest, these two things are the same ; our thoughts are certainly occupied with the important problem of our day, the social conditions of the mass of men. After all, what is it that most of us think about when we are not definitely concerned with our work or some personal matter ? With little doubt, as far as I can gather, ninety-nine people out of a hundred think, whether they want to or not, about, to put it roughly, what is going to happen. I would almost say that this thought oppresses us, lies always in our subconscious, ready at any moment to jump through the chinks and crannies of our minds into the conscious. All of us, I imagine, however little we are naturally politically minded, however feeble our bent towards economics may be, find questions of politics and economics, with or without moral implications, urging themselves upon our thoughts. We cannot avoid the belief that it is on how we think about them that it will depend whether or not we incur disaster. Some day we shall have to make up our minds. Are we or are we not witnessing the collapse of capitalism ? Are we going to wear black shirts or red shirts ? For that is the real political issue to-day. Would it be advisable for the sake of security to abandon the liberty of speech and thought so many generations of our ancestors

fought for? Are we to have a dictatorship, and if so, what kind of dictatorship? How are we going to solve the problem of starvation in the midst of plenty? of combining peace with justice? Every sane person is bound to think about these things, for we are deeply filled with the realization that the trend of events in the next few years is going to affect the whole quality and character of our lives. I will be bold enough to say of all of us, that either we think about these things, or they weigh upon our minds.

But do we, as a rule, when we pick up a novel, find these urgent, essential things so much as touched on? (I am not, of course, referring to novels of escape, but to those which pretend to deepen our apprehension of life.) There is hardly a hint of them. We are beguiled with stories of which the thread is the relations of people with one another, eternal triangles repeated in the same monotonous patterns; or we are invited to consider the fortunes and misfortunes of some particular persons, of no significance as a symbol of some quality in life. They may be actual, but they are certainly not uncommon. And all this usually passes among people of what we might call the sheltered classes; they live in a closed world removed from the present dynamic realities of social life. If there are realities in these books, they are those of the war, realities, that is, not of to-day, but of fifteen years ago. There is nothing in these books to help us to adjust our lives in the surroundings we are fated to encounter; and if it is not the business of literature to aid us in this, then literature, with the other arts, is the futile waste of time some moralists have declared it to be.

This issue, I am aware, raises the whole question of the position of the novelist as part of the organism of society ; and I would repeat that the position is a more important one than ever before, owing to the place the novel now occupies as the chief reading-matter of the mass of people who form public opinion. The novelist, it will be granted, belongs to the sect of " clerks ", to use the medieval term lately brought back into use by M. Julien Benda, the clerks whom M. Benda accuses of having betrayed their trust. And by saying this I hope I have clearly implied that I do not believe it to be the business of the novelist to direct his energies to propaganda. The clerk is to stand aloof from political parties, with their organization of hatreds ; for not to do so involves his clipping his independence of thought to fit a set of dogmas, and what is more, a surrender of his intellectual independence to the very passions he should be intent to comment on and illuminate. One does not ask that the novelist should direct the passions, or frame political issues, but that is not to say that he is not to influence them. Indeed he cannot fail to do so, merely by the presentation of facts, if he presents facts of significance, if he shows what people really are doing, thinking, and feeling.

"This spectacle of man offered to man [I am quoting Renouvier] has considerable moral effects. First a valuable exercise of the intelligence, and increase of reflection, a widening of the view in every direction, result from the habit thus set up of getting out of one's self and entering into others, to understand their actions, to share in their passions, sympathize with their sufferings, appreciate their motives. This faculty of the artist communicated to the spectator or the listener,

this faculty of participation and assimilation, is something set up in opposition to egotism, and is a condition of tolerance and benevolence, frequently even of justice. . . . Then the essential phenomena which characterize conscious humanity and morality occur in him who thus witnesses himself in the person of another, *i. e.* disinterested objectivity of himself to himself, generalization of passion, motive and maxim, judgment founded on the universal, self-examination to arrive at what is duty, clear and defined sentiment of the direction of the will."

This is not to say that the novelist is to be purposive ; and indeed the fate of most didactic art should be warning enough against attempting to be so. The method of art is indirect, and intentional propaganda always defeats its own end. But the novel is a spectacle of man offered to man ; it helps him to generalize his passions by seeing them in a condition of detachment. What he must be offered, then, is a spectacle of man faced with the same conditions as face him, the same problems, the identical social issues. The novelist will not attempt to solve the problems ; he will not deal with social issues as such, but he will, or must if he is to be effective, handle the emotions arising out of those issues. Since the novelist's matter is the life surging around him, he cannot detach himself from it ; he must, on the contrary, be impregnated with the sense of his time, a sense which he shares with his figures, otherwise these figures will exist in a vacuum, clothed in unreality. For when we read a novel, we do not certainly want to have our minds made up for us, but we do want to know about what is going on around us. We want to be told about the world in which we live, and who can do it more convincingly, more imaginatively, than

the novelist ? In this sense, perhaps, every good novel is didactic ; indeed Friedrich Engels said that he learnt more about the banking system from the novels of Balzac than from any treatise on economics.

But, of course, no work of art is purely presentation : life cannot be presented, nor if it could would the result be art, for art is significant, and life is not until the mind works upon it. To write at all, a man must have a point of view, which may or may not swell to the strength of a belief ; at any rate he cannot avoid bias. And it is here that the position of the clerk becomes onerous ; he is in the world, but not of it, and it is his occupation, his task, to clarify issues, to decide which are the ideas of greatest value in man's scheme of things. As artist it is his business to pose the eternal moral questions ; as novelist to place them in the setting of his own day. The majority of our novelists, it is only too evident, fail in this essential task, and in so far as they do so they are false to their trust as clerks, because the effect of their evading the issue is to falsify life. One wonders sometimes, after reading a novel in which people lead lives of passion and endeavour in worlds in which the problems of ours do not intrude, whether a voice did not reach the author from some seventy years ago, whispering insistently, " Wragg is in custody ".

Matthew Arnold, you will remember, tolled this bell of reality, in his essay on ' The Function of Criticism ', and its relevance in an essay on ' The Function of the Novel ' is that the novelist, too, is a critic, a critic of current ideas as lived. What else were our great novelists from Defoe doing if not criticizing the

operative ideas of their time ? Yet our novelists write of luxury voyages, of rides to Epsom on coaches, of men and women whose last anxiety is food ; and all the time Wragg is in custody, not perhaps for murdering her child, but for stealing a pint of milk to feed an infant, which a state with a budget surplus cannot afford to keep alive. And there are more than the mere brute facts of life which the novelist ought to criticize ; as clerk it is his business to clarify ideas, and never was there a time, perhaps, in which there were so many ideas penetrating all awry into the common consciousness than at the present day. I say all awry, because ideas are no longer disseminated by the few capable of grasping them completely, but through the distorting medium of the newspaper, of "chatty" paragraphs in magazines. It is appalling to think what confusion must exist in the general mind on such topics as relativity, Marxism, psychoanalysis, group-consciousness. Some of these notions are vital, dynamic, likely to be directive, of the very kind the novelist is peculiarly fitted to deal with. I would take as an instance the class war. I do not myself believe in the necessity of a class war ; I do not hold that there is a rigid dividing line of class consciousness ; but here, surely, is an idea which the novelist should dissect, analyse, not directly, but by implication ; here above all places, perhaps, is it urgent that he should exercise his function of dispelling hatreds. It is in this realm that his aloofness as a clerk is valuable, his refusal to be dragged into political camps of the first importance.

You will say, perhaps, that there are other things

with which a novelist should deal, more eternal things than a state of society which is after all, like all states of society, transitional. No one will deny that ; though I do not think that the novelist, in dealing with such material, is exercising his peculiar function : that is, rather, the business of the poet, which may account for the form of Mrs. Woolf's later novels. Let us, however, look at the work of novelists who deal with what I will call the personal moral problem, as opposed to the social moral problem. There appears to be—again I must suppose your experience similar to mine—no conception that a point of view, a belief, is necessary. Novels of personal relationship, for instance, are often very subtly written, but after reading them we say, Well, what of personal relations ? Why are they to be attended to ? There is no answer forthcoming. But when Mr. Forster dealt with the personal relation, so exquisitely, and so completely for the time, there was a very distinct answer forthcoming, in the form that an artist would give it. The issue, timely when he wrote, was that of the inner life as opposed to the outer life of telegrams and anger ; the person, if you like, as opposed to the personality conquering society, which was the Victorian subject. It was a protest against blatant imperialism. But do we find anything of the sort to-day ? In this sphere, more even than in the sphere of social morality, it is useless simply to present life. Some problem must be posed, not necessarily solved ; some scale of value suggested, not insisted upon, but vividly implied.

There must, in short, be a theme, and by theme I do not mean the story, but the underlying idea which

directs the story. That, ultimately, is the artist's subject-matter, though he may not be wholly conscious of it. Without theme, a story lacks significance. And to-day it is not easy to discover what the theme of a novel is ; there is no general problem implied, no scale of values suggested. Where is the clarification of ideas we expect the novelist to accomplish, to enable us to adjust ourselves better to the circumstances of our lives, the sort of clarification, for instance, which Meredith accomplished ? We are left in the void, or at least in a curious atmosphere of unreality not unlike that we feel in a novel failing to deal with the social problem. The novelist, in fact, is not *presenting reality*. And the view I would like to put forward is that the cause of the failure in both sorts of novel is the same, and it is that, speaking as a whole, our novelists are not contemporaneous in thought ; they seem unaware of the urgency of the social problem, and oblivious of the fact that in the last few years private morals, personal relations, have taken a new set. Indeed one feels, often in able novels, that the mind brought to bear upon the material is a mind of fifteen or twenty years ago. That may seem a short time, but a great deal has happened in the last fifteen or twenty years. The moral outlook has altered ; in some countries the nature of civilization has been radically transformed ; some change is about to occur here. But not a hint of these things is breathed in the pages which claim to present intelligent people of to-day. The conclusion, bleak and comfortless as it may be, is that our novelists as a whole fail to grapple with contemporary problems, fail in the fundamental task of

thought ; one is conscious of no theme underlying their presentation.

There are, then, two realms that the novelist might deal with—that of what is happening in contemporary minds, and that of what is happening to contemporary bodies, though whether there should be this distinction is another matter. But in neither does he at the moment carry out his duty, as a clerk, of generalizing the passions—that is, placing them in relation with mankind as a whole—or of clarifying the issues. But it is foolish to condemn a whole generation of novelists, as it is absurd to indict a whole nation. I would not suggest that novelists belong to a race composed exclusively of morons. Nor that the whole of fiction is a desert, for if there are no oases, there are at least isolated flowers. In the realm of what is happening in contemporary minds there have lately been some books which leave an impression that a new element has entered into human consciousness. I might indicate, as one example, the work of Miss Compton Burnett, who by a curious artificiality of language, a queer rigidity of characterization, and an impulsive outflow of talk, creates an atmosphere which conveys a new sense of human relationships, a new set of values, the choice, that is, of one thing as being better than another. Again, in the realm of what is happening to contemporary bodies, there are symptoms of a change. Miss Storm Jameson, for example, acutely conscious that the novel is no longer functional, is heroically but modestly forcing herself to trace new paths, to analyse the passions emerging from our social sickness. In his last novel, Mr. Priestley devoted considerable space to a presentation of some

of the miserable realities, in the midst of a book which was otherwise fantasy. If the great body of novelists still seems impervious to contemporary consciousness, these are straws which show the way a healthy wind is blowing.

It is possible, of course, that for a functional novel, impregnated with the social consciousness of our day, we may have to await the arrival of some writer who was born into this consciousness, for whom to face the realities, intellectual and physical, of to-day, will not be a question of mental adjustment but of intuition ; for whom, not having previously written novels conceived in another form, and so trained himself into a groove, the expression will fit the material. But if this is so, seeing what a notable platform the novel offers, it will probably not be long before two or three men or women of talent, perhaps of genius, take possession of it. We must hope to be ready to welcome the portent.

SOME ENGLISH ANTIQUARIES.

BY H. B. WALTERS.

[Read January 27th, 1932.]

THE rise of antiquarian study in this country may be considered to date from the time of John Leland (1506-1552), who was the first and only Englishman to hold the title of King's Antiquary, as he was the first to break from the limitations of the medieval chronicler by diligently exploring his own country, its buildings and ancient sites. During the reign of Elizabeth, Stow and Camden, in their respective fields of research, continued the good work begun by Leland, and early in the seventeenth century Sir William Dugdale with his 'Antiquities of Warwickshire' earned in addition the distinction of being the first English county historian.

All of these were men of extraordinary industry and remarkable personality, but my subject is so large for the time at my disposal that I reluctantly pass them over, and have by preference selected several names covering the latter half of the seventeenth century and the whole of the eighteenth. They are men whose personalities and achievements are perhaps little known to the world at large, but I hope to show that they were no mere dry-as-dusts, but outstanding characters of their age. These men, in their own way, did really admirable work, and the present-day antiquary owes them a debt not always realized.

One of the most notable and perhaps the most interesting of seventeenth-century antiquaries is *John Aubrey* (1626–1697), a native of Wiltshire. He was born and bred at Easton Pierse, near Chippenham, in what he calls “an eremiticall solitude”, and educated by various tutors. His interest in antiquities was manifested at an early age, and he was “always enquiring of his grandfather of the old time, the rood-loft ceremonies of the priory”, and such like matters. In 1642 he went up to Oxford, and like his friend Antony Wood, of whom I shall speak presently, was there during the troublous times of the war. About ten years later his father died, leaving him nothing but debts, but he had already achieved some fame by bringing to light the prehistoric remains at Avebury, hitherto ignored. Subsequently, with the encouragement of Charles II, he made a careful survey of Avebury and Stonehenge, and triumphantly refuted Inigo Jones’s theory of their Roman origin.

Henceforth he led an unsettled life for some years, spending his time mostly in excursions about Wiltshire and other counties, and collecting materials for antiquarian work. He had already begun to enter “philosophicall and antiquarian remarques” into pocket memorandum books, with a view to future use. He succeeded in finishing his ‘Description of North Wilts’, and also a similar work on Surrey, and a volume of ‘Miscellanies’ which was published just before his death. Most of his material, however, was left at his death in manuscript; the Wiltshire material was placed in the Ashmolean Museum, and finally edited by the Rev. J. E. Jackson in 1862.

Even Murray’s ‘Wiltshire Handbook’ is moved to

say that John Aubrey's name must ever be held in the kindly remembrance of Wiltshire men, for using his eyes and making his memoranda, where others were blind or idle, and quotes a passage from his 'North Wilts' which is interesting as showing what he thought of his fellow countrymen: "According to the severall sorts of earth in England the *indigenae* are respectively witty or dull, good or bad. In North Wiltshire (a dirty clayey country) the aborigines speake drawlinge; they are phlegmatique, skins pale and livid, slow and dull, heavy of spirit; hereabout is but little tillage or hand labour: they only milk the cowes and make cheese: they feed chiefly on milke meats, which cools their brains too much and hurts their inventions. These circumstances make them melancholy, contemplative, and malicious; by consequence whereof come more law-suits out of North Wilts, at least double to the Southern parts. And by the same reason they are generally more apt to be fanatiques; their persons are generally plump and feggy; gallipot eies and some black; but they are generally handsome enough. Contrariwise on the Downes, where 'tis all upon tillage, and where the shepherds labour hard, their flesh is hard, their bodies strong. Being weary after hard labour they have not leisure to read on or contemplate of religion but goe to bed to their rest to rise betimes the next morning to their labour."

Aubrey's best-known work, however, is not an archaeological one. This is the 'Brief Lives', recently re-edited by Mr. Collier under the title of 'The Scandals and Credulities of John Aubrey'. The late Mr. Lytton Strachey, who also discovered Aubrey,

and devoted to him one of his delightful 'Portraits in Miniature', considers it a really important authority on seventeenth century England. Its sketches of Bacon, Raleigh, Milton, and others of the time, are touched in with the same photographic vividness that has characterized Mr. Strachey's own work. The same writer goes so far as to call Aubrey "the first English archaeologist". This is certainly true, if we compare him with the earlier topographers such as Leland and Camden. He is the forerunner of the Stukeleys and others of the eighteenth century, whose learning was not confined to antiquarianism, but ranged over many subjects. He had no literary talent, but was always full of information which he could impart with considerable charm, and as a gossip was a kind of immature Boswell. Although he had lost everything as the result of lawsuits—"all my businesses and affaires", he says, "ran kim-kam; nothing tooke effect"—he still claimed to have found happiness by God's providence. Mr. Strachey thinks he is referring to a circle of kind friends ready to help him in return for the benefit of his "most ingeniose conversation".

Aubrey was indeed no man's enemy but his own. He was by nature, to quote Mr. Strachey again, "an amiable muddler"; the words "nothing tooke effect" are true of everything in his life. But his character as an antiquary, which was sadly traduced by Antony Wood, has been fully vindicated by later writers; nor did his other friends regard him as "a shiftless person, roving and magotie-headed and sometimes little better than crazed". Wood's conduct towards his friend was indeed shameful, as for

instance his deliberate mutilation of some much-treasured MS. writings which Aubrey had placed at his disposal. The latter's letter of protest is a masterpiece of forbearance and magnanimity. As Mr. Collier says, "both men are caught for all time, one immortalized as an angel, and the other for ever damned".

The completion of the survey of North Wiltshire brought Aubrey his Fellowship of the Royal Society. As Mr. Strachey has pointed out, he had not really much in common with the work of the Society, his mind moving in the past rather than in the present or future; but he is the typical representative of the new generation of culture, the appearance of which was signalized by the founding of that Society in 1662. His enthusiasm for the past shows itself in his regrets for the destroyed monasteries, and his wish that the reformers had been more moderate on that point. "It was fitt," he says, "that there should be receptacles and provision for contemplative men, and what a pleasure 'twould have been to have travelled from monastery to monastery." For this pleasure indeed he had no bad substitute in travelling from country house to country house.

Aubrey's latter years were spent at Broadchalke in South Wiltshire, where a beam in the church belfry and one of the bells record that he was churchwarden in 1659. He had a great admiration for the bells of Broadchalke, of which he says in his 'Wiltshire Survey': "At Broadchalke is one of the tuneablest rings in Wiltshire, which hang advantageously; the river running near the churchyard, which meliorates the sound." He maintains that if he and Sir George

Penruddock had not got themselves made churchwardens "the faire church had fallen, from the niggardliness of the churchwardens of mean condition". There is another interesting note about Bishop's Cannings church, near Devizes, which boasted one of the earliest rings of eight bells in England, while the parish, says Aubrey, "would have challenged all England for musique, football and ringing".

To *Antony à Wood*, of whom mention has just been made, we are indebted for much that we know of the inner life of Oxford in the seventeenth century. He was born in the city in 1632, and educated at New College Choir School. In 1642, when he was ten years of age, he first came into contact with the outside world, owing to the entry of King Charles into Oxford after the battle of Edge Hill. He recalls how, when the scholars of New College were being trained in arms on the King's behalf by the Warden, Dr. Pink, some of his schoolmates were "so besotted with the activitie and gayitie of the young scholars that they could never be brought to their books again". And he has sad tales to tell of the debauched manners of the younger and more fiery spirits of the University, who "tipped the nights away and made the place resound with roistering songs". After Newbury, in 1644, when Parliament decided to besiege Oxford, "A.W.", as he always styles himself, was hastily withdrawn by his mother to Thame. Here he boarded in the vicarage and attended the Grammar School. But even here his studies were interrupted, firstly when the Parliamentary commander at Aylesbury pursued the Royalists through the town, and again when "another great

alarme to the juvenile Muses at the Vicarage, particularly to A.W.", took place. This time the Roundheads were driven out, and had to leave an ill-gotten supply of venison pasties in the Vicarage, where they were billeted. "At 11 of the clock," says A.W., "none of the said rebels were left to eat the said pasties, so their share fell among the school-boys that were sojourners in the same house". Sometimes the troopers had quite friendly relations with the boys, especially those whom A.W. found to have "grammar learning" in them. The whole account of these times forms a pleasing picture which we can easily imagine, of the Civil War in the eyes of youth.

In 1646, after the Royalists had left Oxford, Wood returned, and duly matriculated at Merton, a college in which his family had interests. He was a dull pupil, and took five years to get his B.A. degree. He might then have obtained a Fellowship, but for his peevish temper. However, he had sufficient means not to be obliged to take up a profession, and devoted himself to the study of English history and heraldry. Being greatly fascinated with Dugdale's 'History of Warwickshire', he aspired to attempt a similar work for his own county, and went about collecting inscriptions and noting antiquities. In order to pursue his studies in peace he had a small chamber built on the top of his father's house, and passed the rest of his life there, as in a hermit's cell.

In 1660 he obtained access to the University archives, and his work then enlarged its scope. He planned a historical survey of the city, including the University, monasteries and parish churches. It was not, however, an original work, being based largely on

Twyne's collections. The city portion remained in manuscript until his death : a bad edition was issued in 1773, but it was not properly published until the Oxford Historical Society included it in their series (1889-1899). The University and Colleges had better luck. In 1674 two large folio volumes appeared, entitled ' *Historia et Antiquitates Universitatis Oxoniensis* ', and including ' *Fasti Oxonienses* ' or lists of chancellors and other officials. The biographical portion was afterwards developed into ' *Athenae Oxonienses* ', but had a disastrous career, chiefly owing to Wood's unfortunate temper. It was ill-received in official quarters, was shamefully mutilated by Dean Fell, and the second volume of the two, which appeared in 1691-92, was voted libellous and publicly burned. But the whole work was full of reckless charges and spiteful criticisms. Wood was eventually prosecuted for libel, found guilty, and expelled the University.

In 1666 we find him complaining of the insolence of the Papists in Oxford, but in 1673 he fell under strong suspicion of being a Papist himself, and there is no doubt that his sympathies were really with Rome, although he actually died in the English Communion. Just before his death in 1695 a visit of William III to Oxford is recorded, for which the University prepared a sumptuous banquet. The King, however, refused to partake of it through fear of poison, and it was seized upon by a town rabble. Wood's comment is—"This is partly my case. I have spent all my time in providing a banquet for the honour of the University, which being done and applauded by the generality, come some barbarous

people and spoil that banquet, burne it in the face of the University and undoe the preparer of the banquet". This of course refers to the fate of the 'Athenae Oxonienses', and is the last entry made in his Diary.

Wood's 'Diaries of his Life and Times', together with his other works, have now all been admirably edited for the Oxford Historical Society. Of no man's life have we such intimate details. I quote here a summary of it as given in the 'Dictionary of National Biography'. "While he was at work his life was exceedingly simple. In the morning he worked either in his study or College rooms or the Bodleian; in the afternoon he prowled round the booksellers' shops, picking up odds and ends. He then walked out with some congenial spirit to Headington or Cumnor and indulged in a pot of ale. The evening he spent in some Common Room, or in gossip at a coffee-house or tavern." There was, however, certainly a disagreeable side to his nature. He had exaggerated ideas of his own importance; he quarrelled with everybody he could, and it was said of him that he never spake well of any man. The story of his bad treatment of his friend Aubrey has already been quoted. The frequent uncomplimentary references to him in Hearne's Diary must, however, be received with caution, for few Oxonians escaped the lash of his criticisms.

In the eighteenth century the tale of Oxford is continued by *Thomas Hearne* (1678-1735), a man of remarkable industry, associated all his life with the University. His autobiography, preserved in MS. in the Bodleian, tells us that he was born in Berkshire,

and as a boy was forced to work as a day-labourer, but in 1693 a pious and learned gentleman, Mr. Cherry, of Shottesbrook, sent him to the Free School at Bray to learn Latin. Here he made great and surprising progress, and was thereupon adopted by his patron, who sent him to St. Edmund's Hall at Oxford, where he found favour with the Principal. After taking his degree he entered on a course of study in the Bodleian, and by his diligence and knowledge obtained the post of Assistant Library Keeper. He claims to have taken incredible pains in regulating the Library and in making new Catalogues. In 1715 he was appointed to the post of Esquire Bedell, but elected to remain in the Bodleian. The Vice-Chancellor did not approve, and ejected him by force. In Hearne's own words, "he was debarred the Library on account of the oaths [*i. e.* as a non-juror], and new keys were made and the lock of the Library door altered, tho' he hath got the old keys by him, having not made any resignation or consented to the putting of anyone in his place". After all this bad usage he retired to his rooms at St. Edmund's Hall, and there continued his studies, refusing all offers of preferment.

Hearne seems to have been an exceedingly difficult and touchy person, and in his Diaries gives vent to very outspoken opinions on persons and things. Being a non-juror, he had no tenderness for the Hanoverians, or for his personal opponents. He only commends what he calls "honest men", *i. e.* non-jurors or adherents of the exiled Royal Family. He styles Bishop Trelawny "an illiterate man, a silly, trifling, and impertinent fellow". On the

Provost of Queen's, Dr. Lancaster, he is even severer : " old smooth-boots " ; " the northern bear " ; " the worst Vice-Chancellor that ever was in Oxford " ; " who raised to himself a pillar of infamy ". Gibbon attacks him in his posthumous works, and Pope in the *Dunciad* (iii. 185) is supposed to allude to him under the title of Wormius. The lines are as follows :

" But who is he, in closet close y-pent
Of sober face, with learned dust besprent ?
Right well mine eyes arede the myster-wight
On parchment scraps y-fed and Wormius hight.
To future ages may thy dulness last
As thou preserv'st the dulness of the past."

Note the appropriate archaic diction. It is only fair to say that Pope has appended a note disclaiming any allusion to " our own Antiquary Mr. Thomas Hearne, who had in no way aggrieved our Poet, but on the contrary published many curious tracts which he hath to his great contentment perused ".

Although an enthusiast for music, chiefly in the form of church-bell ringing, Hearne allowed his political prejudices to prevail on the occasion of Handel's visit to Oxford in 1733, when the great musician's Hanoverian origin was altogether too much for him. He fulminates against " Handell and his lowsy crew, a great number of foreign fiddlers ", and rejoices in his discouragement by the Vice-Chancellor.

Hearne's chief legacy to posterity is his *Diaries*, covering the period 1705-1735, in 145 volumes, recently re-issued by the Oxford Historical Society. They contain much valuable lore and gossip relating

to the University and City, for which he is our chief authority during the period. His industry in reprinting older historical and antiquarian works was marvellous, most notable being his edition of Leland. The Dictionary of National Biography gives a list of 37 such publications by him, all with appendices full of interest. He delights in scandalous tales, and as Mr. Falkener, the historian of Oxfordshire, says : "A vein of undying animosity to the powers that were runs through all his writings. His abuse of all who were not ' honest ' is acid and unstinted."

Among the antiquaries of the eighteenth century the most notable figure is certainly that of *Dr. William Stukeley* (1687-1765). He has additional claims on me as being my great-great-grandfather, but apart from that I have allotted him more space in this paper than others, as in many ways an outstanding personality.

Stukely was born and educated at Holbeach in Lincolnshire. In his 'Family Memoirs', edited by Lukis for the Surtees Society, he tells us much that is of interest about his boyhood and youth. As a boy he used to listen behind a screen to the learned conversations of his father with "an ingenious gent" named Belgrave, in refutation of whose arguments he wrote a small MS. book. He also "took a fancy for old Coyns and Medals, all which fancys were but the dawnings of those studys which I pursu'd at more mature years". On going to Corpus College, Cambridge, in 1703 he became more interested in science, especially Physick, and in 1708 he took his M.B. degree, passing on to St. Thomas's Hospital to study medicine under Dr. Mead. He

had, however, already begun to learn Italian, with a view to travelling in Italy. "Rome which has been the Residence of the greatest genius's that ever lived, firing my Ambition to breath in Italian Air, and could only tempt me to undergo the fatigues and dangers of foreign Expeditions, where I might behold the Pantheon, the Pillars, the Obelisks, the Gates, the Amphitheaters, and all that Art has to boast of great and Venerable . . . to allay my thirst at leisure hours, I drew out a whole paper book of the Antient and Modern Structures there." When at Cambridge, he says: "I had now begun to conceive a passionate love for 'Antiquitys', but I saw that my Affairs would not indulge in foreign speculations of that sort, and so I turned my thoughts for a leisure Amusement to those of my own Country. I frequently took a walk to sigh over the Ruins of Barnwell Abby, and made a Draught of it and used to cutt pieces of the Ewtrees there into Tobacco Stoppers, lamenting the Destruction of so noble monuments of the Piety and Magnificence of our Ancestors. Architecture was ever a favourite Diversion to me and I could sit an hour or two together in the Antichappel of King's College viewing and contemplating the building."

In 1709 he paid a visit to friends in Northamptonshire, where he lived in "a kind of Monastic communication". I cannot resist quoting a charming episode. He was especially pleased with a lady of the family who was "somewhat of an airy temper and accompanyd me in several of my Rambles to view Antiquitys, Roman Camps, and the like. We traveld together like Errant Vertuosos, and when we

came to an old ruined Castle we climbed together, mutually helping each other . . . and when I had occasion to draw a view of them out, she held my inkhorn or paper and was very serviceable and assistant, and all without any reserve or immodesty ; nor could any aged Philosophers have conversed together with more innocent familiarity or less guilt, even in thought or intention. Nor could travelling Curiosity or Antiquarian Researches be rendered so agreeable as with a fair and witty Companion and Fellow-laborer and when we returned home my young Disciple could entertain the Family with so very curious Relation of the curiosities we had seen that it would be difficult to say whether so nice task in the Remains of Ancient Time most recommended a young Lady or that Refined Study became more lovely and delightful for her sake". After all this it is disappointing to learn that she shortly afterwards married "a gentleman in Wales".

In 1718 Stukeley helped to establish the Society of Antiquaries, of which he was Secretary for nine years. About the same time he not only became M.D. and F.R.C.P., but also a Freemason, suspecting that he would thereby find the key to "the remains of the mysteries of the antients". He contracted friendships with the Earl of Pembroke, whose antique marbles at Wilton he drew, and with Roger Gale, the antiquary, with whom he made a tour all over England, as far as the Roman Wall. The outcome of this was his great work, 'Itinerarium Curiosum', of which I shall have more to say presently. Every year he spent a month or two in Wiltshire, investigating the great monuments of Avebury and

Stonehenge, on which he published volumes in 1743. He also spent some time at Grantham in order to collect materials for a memoir of his friend Sir Isaac Newton. Here he laid out a "garden of the Druids" with an apple-tree sprouting mistletoe in the midst. In 1729 he took Holy Orders, and became Vicar of All Saints', Stamford, where he laid out another semi-pagan garden. Thence he migrated to St. George's, Queen Square, in London, where he proved himself, as Mr. E. V. Lucas has recently said, "an unconventional clergyman, neither enthusiastic nor eminent". In 1764 he postponed the service for an hour to give his congregation the chance of witnessing an eclipse of the sun, and in 1758 when he preached for the first time in spectacles he took as his text "now we see through a glass darkly", the sermon being on the evils of too much study.

Of his antiquarian achievements he himself at any rate entertained a very high opinion. In his autobiography he says "he has traced the origin of Architecture with many designs of the Mosaic Tabernacle . . . and an infinity of sacred antiquities . . . but the artifice of booksellers discourages authors from reaping the fruit of their labours". His chief claim to fame rests on his '*Itinerarium Curiosum*', "an account of the Antiquities and remarkable curiosities in nature or art observed in Travels through Great Britain". This was published in 1743, with the following prefatory note: "The intent of this Treatise is to oblige the curious in the Antiquities of Britain; it is an account of places and things from inspection, not compiled from others' labours or travels in one's study . . . if

my sentiments of Roman stations and other matters happen not to coincide with what has been wrote before me, it was not that I differ from them, but things did not appear so to me." He certainly went sadly astray on more than one occasion, as in his identifications of Roman sites in Notts and Herefordshire. His derivation of *Holland* from a Welsh origin is on a par with Camden's derivation of the surname "Drinkwater" from "Derwentwater". But he took more interest in church architecture than most of his contemporaries, and some of the drawings are really excellent.

Stukeley's excursions into numismatics also landed him in some terrible disasters, especially in his drawings and attributions of British coins. The most notorious was in reference to a coin of Carausius with a figure of the goddess Fortuna. The "F" of "Fortuna" having become faint, he ingeniously read the name as Oriuna, and identified the bust of the goddess as Oriuna, the supposed wife of Carausius. He not only refused to be convinced of his error, but wrote a dissertation on his great discovery.

In writing on a Greek coin of Thrace, he introduces us to a curious theory to which he devoted a great deal of attention. In his '*Palaeographica Sacra*', published in 1736, he maintains that heathen mythology was derived from sacred history. In the progress of that work he says: "One of my views is an attempt to recover the faces or resemblances of many great personages in antiquity, mentioned in the Scriptures. . . . The uniformity of the faces drawn in each, in all the sculptures of antiquity, gives much reason to think they are copys from one

true original and that it is we endeavour to find out. I shall give a full account of the heathen gods and demigods, who mean really the persons of Moses and Josua, the two generals of Bacchus or Jehovah, and from innumerable sculptures in antiquity we may justly presume the heroic resemblances of these two are to be found."

The coin in question he rightly associates with the goddess Cotytto, or Cotys, who he says "was worshipt by the ladys of that countrey who ran about naked, drunk and frantick in the night-time with torches in the celebration of her religious rights (*sic*), and on the reverse is one of these mad girls represented". So far this is all very well, but unfortunately he goes on to identify the Thracian goddess with Miriam, the sister of Moses, not only because she is recorded to have danced on one occasion, but because he is assured of the facial resemblance! And he has of course many reasons for the name of Cotys being "of Hebrew original". But it seems a bit hard on Miriam to be confused with the "drunken and frantic" participants in Bacchic orgies!

Stukeley is summed up by Warburton, Bishop of Gloucester, who was one of his oldest friends, as a learned and honest man, but a strange compound of simplicity, drollery, absurdity, ingenuity, superstition and antiquarianism. Thomas Hearne, as might be expected, is by no means so complimentary: "He is a very fancifull and conceited man, and the things he hath published are built on fancy. He is looked upon as a man of no great authority, and his reputation dwindles every day, as I have learned from very good hands. He hath published a draught of Old

Verulam with strange fancifull things. He hath published a draught of Waltham Cross all fancy, yet the Cross is standing, and Mr. Bridges hath published a true draught of it." I imagine that most modern critics would be of the same opinion.

One of the foremost and most competent antiquaries of the eighteenth century was *Browne Willis* (1682–1760). He was educated at Westminster, where an intense love of antiquities was implanted in him by his school-day rambles in the Abbey, and afterwards at Christchurch, Oxford. He inherited considerable property in Buckinghamshire, and also an estate in Herefordshire, where he was acquainted with John Philips, who alludes to Willis in his poem on cider. From 1705 to 1708 he sat in Parliament for Buckingham, but afterwards became immersed in the study of antiquities. He took an active part in the revival of the Society of Antiquaries in 1717, and helped to restore several of the more important churches in his own neighbourhood. Meanwhile he turned his attention specially to the English and Welsh Cathedrals, of which he visited every one except Carlisle. He was one of the first antiquaries to base his work on registers and other records, but was very inaccurate in detail. His work, however, is of immense value for the study of ecclesiastical topography.

His published literary works include surveys of the Welsh and some English Cathedrals, and a 'History of the Mitred Abbeys and Conventual Cathedral Churches', as well as some works on the topography of his own county, but only a portion of these were actually printed. He also brought out

a work entitled ' *Parochiale Anglicanum* ', a list of the churches in the English and Welsh Dioceses with the dedication of each, and the number of bells in the tower. The frequent inaccuracies in these lists seem to suggest that he usually trusted too much to vague local information, as did others of his contemporaries, notably Morant of Essex. Besides these he left no less than 112 volumes of manuscript, which are now in the Bodleian. He died in 1760. and was buried at Fenny Stratford, close to Bletchley, the church of which place he had rebuilt.

Browne Willis is described as a great oddity, who knew nothing of mankind. His charities were so great that he ruined his estate and ended his days almost in penury and squalor. Nichols in his ' *Literary Anecdotes* ' relates some pleasing anecdotes of his manner of life and eccentricities, which were somewhat forcibly satirized by a neighbouring rector, Dr. Darrell of Lillingstone Dayrell. The doggerel verse is amusing but too long to quote. Cole describes him as more like a mumping beggar than a gentleman, and compares his appearance to that of old Hobson, the famous Cambridge carrier. A lady acquaintance of his goes even further, and says " he is the dirtiest creature in the world, so much so that it is quite disagreeable to sit by him at table, and his great-coat has been, I believe, transmitted down from Noah ". He was also known as " Old Wrinkle Boots " from his ancient and ill-fitting footgear. Another nickname among his antiquarian friends was " Old Chariot ", derived from the extreme antiquity of his coach and its perpetual motion with him on

the roads. But some allowance must be made for the poverty of his later years.

He must at any rate have been a great puzzle as well as a great joke to his neighbourhood. Nichols tells a story of his visiting an old house in Buckinghamshire on quest of heraldry, and asking a woman if they had any *arms* in the house. As this was in the year of rebellion, 1745, the woman was naturally suspicious and told him what she thought of him. A similar story is told by the same writer of a Cambridge antiquary, who when passing by an old mansion asked an old woman if that was a *religious house*. "I don't know what you mean by a religious house," retorted she, "but I believe it is as honest a house as any of yours at Cambridge".

Nichols in his 'Illustrations' gives an amusing description of Browne Willis at home, from the pen of Dr. Sneyd Davies, who says: "You may go and consult *Browne Willis*, a man of a singular character . . . a genuine Antiquary, in learning, manners, habit, and person so extraordinary that I think it worth a digression to give you an account of him." After a description of his house and garden, Dr. Davies goes on to say: "There is many a Saxon bust, of man or beast, but which is not well determined; numberless fragments of painted glass, scraps of inscriptions, and shreds of deeds.

"In his library, adorned with fretwork of pendent spiders' webs, you will find a large collection of *Coins*, down from *Abraham* to the *Borough halfpenny*. [A coin of Abraham, by which I suppose he means the well-known Jewish silver shekel, is worthy of Dr. Stukeley.]

“Amongst his MSS., written all of them in his own hand with incredible assiduity you will see a laborious Dictionary of Lords, Abbots, Parliament-men, Gentlemen, Clergymen, and Parish Clerks, ever since the *Saxon* invasion; and in what may be called his *family pictures* you have the most copious registers of marriages, births, and burials, that is to be found in the world.

“The territory around him has been remarkable for considerable actions heretofore; but is now disfigured with pits, dug not for marle, gravel, or earthly use, but in search of *Roman* spears and *Saxon* stirrups.

“He shows a botanical curiosity, unparalleled in *England*, *Europe*, or the Universe. It is a willow basket, propagated from the identical *wicker basket* of *Druidism* recorded by Julius Caesar; though some carry it no higher than the *bucking-basket*, well known in the facetious reign of *Henry the Fourth*.”

Browne Willis's chief crony was *William Cole* (1714–1782), the Cambridge antiquary, who was a native of that county, and was for five years on the foundation at Eton. Here his principal friend and companion (as in after life) was Horace Walpole, who used to jeer at his inclination towards Roman Catholicism. The poet Thomas Gray was two years his junior there, but Cole, though in after years on very friendly terms with him, speaks of his manner as “disgustingly effeminate, finical, and affected”. Even as a boy Cole had a habit of copying monumental inscriptions and drawing coats of arms. In 1733 he went to Clare College at Cambridge, and migrated to King's three years later, where he

occupied rooms in what are now called the Fellows' Buildings for seventeen years. Having taken orders, in 1749 he was collated to the Rectory of Hornsey, but resigned owing to trouble with his Bishop. In 1753 Browne Willis, who wanted his help in his 'History of Buckinghamshire', presented him to his living of Bletchley. But Cole complained of being cut off from his "Disquisitions" at Cambridge, and was disgusted to find that he could not move out of his parish until Willis's death in 1760.

In 1747 he was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries, of which body Horace Walpole had no great opinion. He writes to Cole in 1778: "The Antiquarians will be as ridiculous as they used to be; and since it is impossible to infuse taste into them, they will be as dry and dull as their predecessors. . . . Their Saxon and Danish discoveries are not worth more than the Monuments of the Hottentots; and for Roman remains in Britain, they are upon a foot with what ideas we should get of Inigo Jones, if somebody was to publish views of huts and houses that our officers run up at Senegal and Goree. . . . I exempt you entirely from my general censure on antiquaries, both for your singular modesty in publishing nothing yourself, and for collecting stones and bricks for others to build with. . . . When half its colleges are tumbled down, the ancient University of Cambridge will revive from your collections and you will be quoted as a living witness that saw its splendour." Walpole regarded Cole as his oracle "in any antique difficulties".

Cole at one time had a great desire to take up his residence in France, possibly with a view to joining

the Roman Church, and even tried to persuade the English Benedictine Priory in Paris to accept him as an inmate. But Walpole reminded him that there were certain drawbacks to be encountered. In a letter written March 9th, 1765, he says: "One thing has struck me which I must mention, though it would depend on a circumstance that would give me the most concern. It was suggested to me by the great fondness I have for your manuscripts, for your kindness about which I feel the utmost gratitude. You would not, I think, leave them behind you, and are you aware of the danger they would run if you settled entirely in France? Do you know that the King of France is heir to all strangers who die in his dominions by what they call the *Droit d'Aubaine*? . . . If you go I shall expect you to have your MSS. deposited with me. Seriously you must leave them in safe custody behind you." To which Cole replied on March 17th: "They (the MSS) are my only delight—they are my wife and children; they have been in short my whole employment and amusement for these 20 or 30 years; and though I really and sincerely think the greatest part of them stuff and trash and deserve no other treatment than the fire, yet the collections which I have made towards a History of Cambridgeshire will be of singular use to anyone who will have more patience and perseverance than I am master of, to put the materials together."

Being also much shocked at the prevailing spirit of irreligion in France, Cole thought the better of it, but he was still determined to see something of the country, and in the autumn of that year he and

Walpole set off together for a five weeks' tour, the latter frankly to enjoy the world of gaiety, but Cole to see and note all that he could in the time. His experiences are recorded in very full detail in a diary which he kept, and which is now in his MS. collections in the British Museum. It has recently been edited by F. G. Stokes, with an amusing introduction by Miss Helen Waddell. The interest of the journal, as the latter points out, really lies in the glimpses it gives throughout of the writer's personality, but it is also exceedingly valuable for its description of Paris before the Revolution, and the exact account of the religious and other edifices. Cole has a great enthusiasm for the gothic buildings, especially Nôtre Dame.

In 1768 he resigned the living of Bletchley and went to live in an uncomfortable cottage at Waterbeach near Cambridge, a place abounding in fanatics of all denominations. By way of consolation, however, he frequently enjoyed the company of Gray, who used to come out from Pembroke, and sit and smoke with him. In 1770 he removed to Milton, the next village, where he spent the remainder of his days. He was buried under the belfry of St. Clement's Church, Cambridge, which was erected out of funds bequeathed by him, and bears in front his motto, "Deum Cole". He also wrote a long epitaph for his monument. Cole had a great predilection for Cambridge, and always shunned Oxford as "ill served with water and unwholesomely seated".

The diary which he kept at Bletchley Nichols pronounces "truly laughable and worse than the honest Humphrey Wanley's", as it only records such

trivial events as the death of his favourite parrot, the condition of his wigs, or the fact that at the Archdeacon's visitation nobody smoked. But since these lines were written, Mr. Stokes has followed up his previous volume with a transcript of this diary, also with a preface by Miss Waddell. Mr. Birrell, in reviewing it in the *Observer*, compared it favourably with Parson Woodforde's contemporary efforts, and certainly Nichols's estimate of it is far from just. It gives a very favourable impression of Cole, both as a Christian and a gentleman. Nichols also tells us that his portrait was painted by Hogarth, and hung in a friend's rooms at Clare. As the chimney-piece could not be got into the picture, he says, "Mr. Hogarth has drawn a Cat sitting near it to express the situation agreeably to his Humour".

Cole never published anything himself, but contributed to other topographical works and to the *Gentleman's Magazine*. He also transcribed Browne Willis's History of two Buckinghamshire Hundreds, the original MS. copy of which is in the Bodleian, but has never been printed. His only literary monument is the magnificent collection of MSS. in 100 volumes, bequeathed to the British Museum, with the proviso that they should be kept locked up until twenty years after his death. The reason for this was that they contained many of his opinions of his friends' merits or demerits, which he was not anxious to make known during his lifetime, or even longer. As a specimen, he wrote in his 'History of King's College' in 1782, with reference to his cottage at Milton (a King's living), "after six years of occupancy Cooke (the Provost) the head of it had the

rascality, with Paddon, a dirty wretch and bursar suitable to him, to alter my lease. But from such a scoundrel, and I am warranted to call him no other, and would call him so to his face the first time I see him, with the addition of a liar and mischief-maker through life, no other than dirty treatment can be expected". He is hardly less uncomplimentary to Dr. Foster, the Head-master of Eton, who he says is unfit for the post, "being more of a scholar than a gentleman, and thought to write in too dogmatical and pert a manner for so young a man".

The most important of Cole's MSS. are the "Parochial Antiquities of Cambridgeshire", illustrated with drawings of the churches, monuments, and arms, and the collections relating to King's College and the University. He also wrote accounts of churches in Buckinghamshire and other parts of England, in addition to transcribing much of Browne Willis's work. An excellent index to the whole of them has recently been made and printed by Mr. G. H. Gray. It is much to be desired that more of the collections of both men should be transcribed and published, and I understand that this is now being done with regard to the Cambridgeshire collections, a most laudable undertaking by the Cambridge Antiquarian Society.

The antiquaries I have hitherto been considering have mostly been typical of their time, men of leisure and sometimes also of means, or trained scholars in good positions, who seem to have taken as their motto, "*Homo sum ; nihil humanum a me alienum puto*". But they paved the way for a more specialized type of antiquarian work, that of the county

historian or topographer, who devoted his energies, and sometimes his whole life, to researches in the past of his own neighbourhood. These are for the most part men of less originality and less reputation than such men as Aubrey and Stukeley, and the interest in them lies not so much in their personalities as in the work they actually achieved. But their merits are really no less great, and without their labours the modern county historian would often be but badly served.

Such men were John Bridges, the historian of Northamptonshire; Edward Hasted of Kent; John Hutchins of Dorset; Manning and Bray of Surrey; Philip Morant of Essex; and Nash of Worcestershire. The best of these works is probably Manning and Bray's 'Surrey'. Space, however, will not permit me to treat of more than one or two in detail, and the claims of my own county, Worcestershire, have tempted me to select my examples therefrom.

Thanks to the labours of *Dr. Treadway Russell Nash* (1725–1811), Worcestershire has been as well described as any county, except perhaps Surrey. He was connected with the well-known family of the Russells of Strensham, and was born near Kempsey, educated at the King's School, Worcester, and at Worcester College, Oxford, where he was elected scholar at the age of fifteen. Having taken orders, he was presented to the Vicarage of Eynsham, Oxfordshire, and also became tutor of his old college. In 1758 he took his D.D. degree, and on his marriage to Margaret Martin of Overbury, purchased the estate of Beveré, near Worcester. In 1773 he first conceived the idea of a 'History of Worcestershire'

being written, and eventually set about it himself. Although he only met with a meagre response to the printed inquiries which he sent out to the clergy and gentry, he persevered, and published the first volume in 1781, the second in 1782, with a supplement in 1799. Having been instituted to the Rectory of Strensham in 1797, he was anxious to honour its illustrious native Samuel Butler, and brought out a splendid edition of 'Hudibras'. He died at Beveré at the age of 86, and was buried in St. Peter's Church, Droitwich.

In compiling his great work on Worcestershire, Nash made much use of the collections of Habingdon, Dr. Thomas, and Bishop Lyttelton, in the Society of Antiquaries' Library. He modestly calls it 'Parochial Collections' rather than a "History", wishing it to be remembered that a county historian "is by profession a dealer in small ware". The work was not everywhere favourably received. Daniel Prince, as Nichols tells us, found fault with the botany. Horace Walpole, writing to Cole in 1781, says, "Dr. Nash has just published the first volume of his Worcestershire; it is a folio of prodigious corpulence and yet dry enough; but then it is finely dressed, and has many heads and views". And a certain Dr. Barton humorously observed to Nash that his publication was deficient in many respects. Dr. Nash endeavoured to defend his volume in the best manner he was able. "Pray, Doctor," said Barton, "are you not a Justice of the Peace?" "I am," replied the Doctor. "Then," said Barton, "I advise you to send your work to the House of Correction".

Nash was also Vicar of Leigh in Worcestershire.

Cuthbert Bede tells the story that he used to preach there once a year just before the tithe-audit. his text being always, "Owe no man anything". On these occasions he drove from Beveré in a carriage and four "with servants afore him and servants ahind him.". He liked to make a splash when he thought the occasion demanded it, but otherwise he was of a penurious disposition, which gave rise to the epigram :

" The Muse thy genius well divines
And will not ask for cash,
But *gratis* round thy brow she twines
The laurel, Dr. Nash."

In his biographical account of Nash, written in 1820, Chambers makes the following allusion : " There is a gentleman in this county in every way fitted for the task of writing its history, who has for many years been making a collection which shall supersede Dr. Nash's book. I trust it will be published, and in such a style as circumstances will allow." This is, I believe, the only contemporary printed notice of another Worcestershire antiquary, *Dr. Peter Prattinton*, of Bewdley, who has only recently been brought out of obscurity by a present-day Worcestershire antiquary, Mr. E. A. B. Barnard, who has kindly allowed me to draw freely on his recently-issued memoir.

Prattinton was born at Bewdley in 1770, the son of a wholesale grocer who carried on a very extensive trade with commodities supplied from Bristol up the Severn. He matriculated at Christchurch, Oxford, in 1789, and became a Bachelor of Medicine in 1797,

but though always entitled "Doctor", he never actually practised. On the death of his father he inherited considerable private means, and devoted himself to the pursuit of Worcestershire history and antiquities. He inherited an estate known as South Hall, which entitled him to describe himself as Lord of the Manor of Doverdale, but he writes to a friend about it, "South Hall Estate is unfortunately mine". He died in 1840, leaving instructions that his body should be conveyed to Oxford, and there examined, and if possible a lecture delivered on it. A plain monument in Worcester Cathedral which he also ordered was eventually set up after his death, but of the anatomical study of his body we hear nothing more.

But the most important feature of his will was the bequest of all his collections to the Society of Antiquaries, a Society of which indeed he was never a Fellow, but he had a close connection therewith through his long-continued work on the Habington MSS. This bequest consists of over 100 volumes, entirely relating to Worcestershire topography and history, of which 37 deal with the parishes in alphabetical order. Prattinton collected every scrap of information he could from earlier sources, and to this he added his own descriptions of the churches and their monuments. These include a large number of water-colour sketches, now of inestimable value, seeing that many of the churches have been rebuilt or restored out of recognition, and their characteristic features obliterated. He has thus preserved for us the appearance of the typical Worcestershire village church, many of which were built wholly or partially

of timber. Other volumes of the collection deal with biographies of Worcestershire ecclesiastics and other notables, or with the Cathedral records.

We cannot claim that Prattinton was a public figure like some of those antiquaries whom I have discussed, nor have we access to details of his private life, to show the sort of man he was, but he has always seemed to me a man worth rescuing from oblivion, both as an example of whole-hearted devotion to his own native county, and as an instance of the amount of really useful work which was being done in a quiet and unpretending way by such men 150 years ago. He was essentially, as Mr. Barnard says, a collector and not an author. His life must have been one of untiring industry, to judge from its results, and he not only spent much time in travelling over the county to study churches and documents, but also in research work at Worcester Cathedral, and in the British Museum and Bodleian. In these days of rapid travelling, we do not easily realize what this must have involved. He lets us into one little secret of his methods of working, recording that the little mottled note-books which he used "are sold for one penny; sometimes you get a Pencil into the bargain"!

We must remember that the eighteenth century topographers, such as Hasted, Morant, or Nash, were always more historians than antiquaries. Their interest in genealogy and heraldry was great, and they give frequent pedigrees and descriptions of coats-of-arms. But in describing parish churches they usually say little or nothing of the architecture, except to dismiss them somewhat contemptuously as

“ ancient Saxon edifices ”. or perhaps to enlarge on their elegant restoration, presumably in the Classical style. Some exceptions, however, should be noted, such as Prattinton, or Parkes, who left an admirable series of drawings of Shropshire churches. Few counties have suffered more from the restoration fiend than the two to which I have alluded.

In any case the modern compilers of county histories owe a vast debt to their predecessors. Take, for instance, such a production as the ‘ Victoria County History ’, with its efficient staff of well-trained young architects and learned ladies from the Universities, speeding about in motor-cars, or with all the resources of the British Museum and the Record Office at their disposal. What a contrast to such men as Browne Willis or Stukeley, struggling with obscure manuscripts hard of interpretation, or painfully plodding along bad roads on their nags—one is tempted to say of some of them that though *they* may have sat heavily on those nags, their clerical duties seem to have sat but lightly on *them*. It is a marvel that they achieved what they did, and left so much valuable material for the use of a properly grateful posterity. I speak from my own experience as a worker in a limited area of the same field.

NOTE.—I may seem to have been somewhat wanting in respect to my learned ancestor Dr. Stukeley (p. 94). But it is only fair to say that recent explorations at Avebury have done much to confirm his theories about that site.

THE POETRY OF JOHN WILMOT, EARL OF ROCHESTER.

BY VIVIAN DE SOLA PINTO.

[Read January 24th, 1934.]

PERHAPS the wisest course for a poet, if he wishes his writings to be assessed at their true value by posterity, is to be, like Aristotle's tragic hero, neither a very good nor a very bad man. If he is a very good man, the public will be more interested in his virtues than in his poetry, and the professional moralists will turn his poems into sermons. If he is a bad man, the public will think only of his vices, and will read his poems, not for their own sake, but with an eye to finding out something interesting concerning his depravity. The literary reputation of a number of English poets has been injured by the attention paid by posterity to religious and moral aspects of their lives. George Herbert was admired for a long time, not for his fine poetry, but for his holy living and his sound Anglican doctrine. The works of Dr. Isaac Watts, one of the most remarkable poets of the early eighteenth century, are still a closed book to most lovers of poetry, because his memory has become enveloped in such thick clouds of conventional piety and sectarian adulation. The fate of the poetry of John Wilmot, second Earl of Rochester, has been

even more unfortunate. It has never really had a fair chance because the poet was not only a libertine, but he was also a nobleman, a wicked lord whose doings at once horrified and delighted the English public, and finally he was converted at the end of his life in a dramatic way that naturally made an irresistible appeal to the imagination of the pious. The result has been that his reputation has in the main been delivered into the hands of the two great classes of English readers whom George Meredith called the Puritans and the Bacchanalians. Some writers have suffered at the hands of one of these classes, but Rochester is probably the only one whose fame (or notoriety) has been placed by circumstances at the mercy of both. The Puritans have had ample materials for their purposes in the admirable 'Life and Death of John, Earl of Rochester', written by Gilbert Burnet the historian, who was the chief agent in bringing about the poet's conversion, and in the funeral sermon preached by Robert Parsons, the family chaplain, on the appropriate text from the Gospel of St. Luke, "I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth more than over ninety and nine just persons that need no repentance". Both these works passed through many editions, and were a godsend to the righteous. This is the way in which the writer of a tract published in the early nineteenth century describes Rochester: "This nobleman was distinguished in his life as a great wit and a great sinner, and in his last illness as a great penitent. Such he is described by the excellent Bishop Burnet, who personally knew him and attended him on his death-bed. Before this

period he had advanced to an uncommon degree of impiety, having been a zealous advocate in the black cause of Atheism. He had raked likewise in the depths of debauchery, and had openly ridiculed virtue and religion. But when, like the prodigal in the Gospels, he came to know himself, horror filled his mind and drew the keenest self-reproaches. He was in his own eyes the vilest wretch on which the sun ever shone, and often wished that he had been a link-boy, a beggar, or a captive in a dungeon, rather than that he should have so grossly offended God." There is always something peculiarly delightful to the middle-class Puritan in the spectacle of the conversion of a sinful nobleman. Snobbery, piety and pruriency are all satisfied at the same time.

The Bacchanalians have done quite as much harm as the Puritans. Rochester, like most aristocratic poets of the seventeenth century, probably never authorized the publication of any of his poems, but had manuscript copies made for his friends. In 1680, the year of his death, there appeared the first of a long series of dishonest editions issued by publishers of very doubtful reputation, in which all kinds of obscene doggerel, on much of which Rochester probably never set eyes, has been fathered on the unfortunate Earl. Similar editions continued to appear throughout the eighteenth century. In these editions the number of apocryphal works ascribed to Rochester steadily increases, and there were manuscript commonplace books too, some of which still survive, in which indecent trifles which Rochester may or may not have written for his own amusement and that of his friends have been diligently transcribed

to amuse generations of sniggerers. The account of Rochester in Hamilton's 'Memoirs of De Gramont' and the letter concerning his alleged exploits ascribed to St. Evrémond, and printed at the head of some editions of his poems, have been as useful to the Bacchanalians as Burnet and Parsons have been to the Puritans. They have perpetuated the conventional portrait of the gay, light-hearted, cynical debauchee as the Puritans have perpetuated the equally conventional portrait of the noble convert.

Neither the Puritans nor the Bacchanalians really cared for Rochester's poetry. If they read it at all, they read it with an ulterior motive. Keats disliked the kind of poetry that has a palpable design on the reader. There is also a kind of gossip-mongering that has a palpable design on poets, and which sometimes succeeds in surrounding their memories with a sort of haze that distorts the vision even of great critics. It is so easy to accept a ready-made opinion, and so difficult to read poetry with understanding and form one's own opinion about it. The accepted estimate of Rochester's poetry based on what was commonly known concerning his life and opinions has been that it consists of the elegant, ingenious and often indecent triflings of a gay and witty profligate. Even such a great writer as Dr. Johnson is to some extent misled by this view. He writes in his 'Lives of the Poets' that Rochester's songs "have no particular character, they tell like other songs in smooth and easy language of scorn and kindness, dismissal and desertion, absence and inconstancy with the commonplaces of artificial courtship. They are commonly smooth and easy ;

but with little nature and little sentiment ". Beljame in his great work, 'Le Public et les Hommes de lettres en Angleterre au dix huitième siècle', sums up the whole of the poetry of the courtly writers of Charles II's reign as follows : " Leur Muse, il faut le dire, n'a pas l'inspiration très puissante. Elle l'épuise en général en quelque strophes ou pour mieux dire en quelque couplets, car elle fait plutôt les chansons qu'autre chose. . . . Elle n'a pas du reste les visées bien hautes. Elle ne recherche ni les grandes idées, ni le grand style : une petite pensée délicate dans une forme facile et harmonieuse, voilà son idéal." The late Sir Edmund Gosse compared Rochester's poetry to "a beautiful child which has wantonly rolled itself in the mud, and which has grown so dirty that the ordinary wayfarer would rather pass it by hurriedly than do justice to its native charms ".

The fallacy that underlies all these criticisms is that it is impossible for the poetry of an elegant rake to be taken seriously. It is a fallacy based on the crude kind of psychology that divides up mankind into neatly labelled groups, and supposes that all the members of each group will display the same characteristics. Rochester was certainly an elegant rake, but he was very far from being a common pleasure seeker ; he was far even from being a representative courtier of the Restoration. He was a highly complex character, a man with a thoroughly original mind and a keen and penetrating intellect. Burnet and Parsons concur in representing him as an untiring student of ancient and modern literature, and a lover of speculative thought. The portrait of him by his friend

Sir George Etherege as Dorimant in 'Sir Fopling Flutter or the Man of Mode' is not the portrait of an ordinary man about town. It is the picture of a fine gentleman, who is a master of the art of living, a really brilliant figure embodying all the grace and charm of the aristocratic ideal of the day, the forerunner of Congreve's Mirabel in the 'Way of the World'. Finally there are the letters to his wife and son and his friend Henry Savile, where we find a tenderness and a gentle humour that contrast strangely with the conventional figure of the hardened monster who, in Sir Edmund Gosse's words, "seems to pass through the social history of his time like a veritable devil". It is true that the records of a poet's life are often of great assistance to the reader who wants to form a just estimate of his works, but to be of any real value for this purpose, these records must be full and authentic. So, if we wish to judge Rochester's poetry in relation to his life, we must keep in view not only the conversations with Burnet, the sermon of Parsons, and the scandalous gossip preserved in the 'Memoirs' of De Gramont and elsewhere, but also the brilliant and delightful Dorimant in Etherege's play, and the kind-hearted husband, father and friend revealed by the correspondence. Now that the scholarly and well-balanced biography of Herr Johannes Prinz has placed almost all the known facts before the public, it is time that an attempt was made to revalue Rochester's poetry in the light of a new and more authentic portrait of the man that should replace the highly coloured caricatures of the pietists and the profligates. The present moment is, perhaps, opportune, because

criticism appears to be freeing itself from the two widespread delusions of the nineteenth century that good poetry can only be written by persons of spotless morality, and that it must be based on an optimistic and idealistic philosophy. No one now denies that Catullus and Villon and Baudelaire wrote excellent poetry, and it is coming also to be admitted that Pope could make real poetry out of hatred, and Crabbe out of ugliness, just as Spenser and Shelley could make it out of ideal love and ideal beauty, and that the house of the Muses has a mansion to accommodate Rimbaud's sonnet on the charms of a slice of ham and a buxom barmaid, as well as Dante's sonnet on the smile of Beatrice and Shakespeare's on the marriage of true minds.

In attempting a revaluation of Rochester's poetry, the qualities that should be most strongly emphasized are its intellectual power and its seriousness. Rochester is the only serious thinker among the aristocratic poets of the Restoration. Unlike the charming verses of his friends Sedley and Dorset, his poetry is distinguished by what Rossetti called "fundamental brainwork". It is the poetry of a man who has not only read widely, but who has thought for himself. The essential seriousness of Rochester's mind is well illustrated by his very able arguments on religion, which are so fairly reported by Burnet. The same seriousness is found in his best poems. It is true that his favourite theme is pleasure, but it is not so much pleasure itself as a philosophy of sensationalism based on the works of Hobbes. Parsons, in his funeral sermon, represents Rochester as saying after his conversion that "that

absurd and foolish Philosophy which the world so much admired, propagated by the late Mr. Hobbs, and others, had undone him, and many more of the best parts in the nation". Certain passages in Hobbes's 'Leviathan' seem to have made a deep impression on Rochester's mind. For instance the description of pleasure in the sixth chapter of the first part: "*Pleasure* therefore or *Delight* is the apparence, or sence of Good; and Molestation or *Displeasure*, the apparence, or sence of Evill. And consequently all Appetite, Desire and love, is accompanied with some Delight more or lesse; and all Hatred, and Aversion, with more or less Displeasure or Offence. Of Pleasures, or Delights, some arise from the sense of the Object Present; and those may be called Pleasures of Sense. (The word *Sensuall*, as it is used by those onely that condemn them, having no place till there be lawes.) Of these all Onerations and Exonerations of the body; as also all that is pleasant, in the Sight, Hearing, Smell, Tast, or Touch; others arise from Expectation that proceeds from foresight of the End, or consequences of Things; whether these things in the sense Please or Displease." From the fifteenth chapter Rochester could learn that "*Good* and *Evill*, are names that signifie our Appetites and Aversions; which in different tempers, customes, and doctrines of men, are different; And divers men, differ not onely in their judgment, on the senses of what is pleasant, and unpleasant to the tast, smell, hearing, touch, and sight; but also of what is conformable, or disagreeable to Reason, in the actions of common life. Nay the same man, in divers times, differs from himselfe; and at one time praiseth, that

is calleth Good, what another time he dispraiseth, and calleth Evil. And therefore as long as man is in the condition of meer Nature private Appetite is the measure of Good, and Evill." It is true that Hobbes is speaking of the "State of Nature" concerning which he had no illusions, but it was his description of the natural life, free from the inhibitions of civilization, that appealed to Rochester and his friends. They were a post-war generation weary of the cant of outworn idealisms. There was something peculiarly refreshing in Hobbes's conception of the natural state of man, where the pleasures of the senses should be recognized frankly as the only real pleasures, and the words "good" and "evil" admitted to be purely relative terms. Rochester seems to have adopted this hedonistic materialism with a passionate enthusiasm similar to that displayed by Shelley for the philosophy of Godwin. In the poem called 'Love and Life', perhaps the greatest of his lyrics, he gives poetic form to the pure idea of sensationalism, the conception of a life devoted to the enjoyment of the exquisite moment of sensuous pleasure :

" All my past Life is mine no more,
 The flying Hours are gone :
 Like Transitory Dreams giv'n o're,
 Whose Images are kept in store,
 By Memory alone.

" The Time that is to come is not ;
 How can it then be mine ?
 The present Moment's all my lot ;
 And that, as fast as it is got,
Phyllis, is only thine.

“ Then talk not of Inconstancy,
False Hearts, and broken Vows ;
If I, by Miracle, can be
This live-long Minute true to thee,
’Tis all that Heav’n allows.”

Let us exclude the past with its memories and the future with its hopes and fears. Let us live simply for the delicious moment of sensation. In such a world constancy and betrayal are meaningless words. They refer to what does not exist, the past and the future. That may not be a sound moral philosophy, but poets in their poetry do not live and ought not to live in the pincfold of the moralist. In ‘ Love and Life ’ Rochester conveys to the reader not merely by the sense of the words, but by their sound and by the rhythm of his lines, the dream of the sensationalist, the life of exquisite momentary pleasure. And curiously enough the beauty of the poem is largely due to the fact that the poet is really aware that this hedonistic philosophy is only a dream. The music of the wonderful phrase “ flying hours ” is full of sadness, and the effect of the whole poem is mournful rather than joyous. It makes us feel that after all the delightful present cannot be isolated, and that it is at once rapidly melting into the future and fading into the past. The Restoration period was a great age of experiment in all directions, in science, in religion, in philosophy and in literature. The Quakers and other sects tried to return to the conditions of primitive Christianity. Rochester is trying the intellectual experiment of returning to Hobbes’s ‘ State of Nature ’ when there was no moral law, and the word “ sensual ” had no bad connotation. Rochester

pursues this materialistic philosophy with unflinching honesty to its logical conclusions. Those conclusions were a profound scepticism and ultimately misanthropy. He is essentially a poet of disillusionment, and his distrust of all conventional and traditional beliefs reminds us strongly of the attitude of modern poets of the post-war period. In a sombre and majestic fragment adapted from Seneca, but reminiscent also of Lucretius, he rejects the doctrine of human immortality :

“ After Death nothing is, and nothing Death ;
 The utmost limits of a Gasp of Breath.
 Let the ambitious Zealot lay aside
 His Hope of Heav’n ; (whose Faith is but his Pride)
 Let slavish Souls lay by their Fear,
 Nor be concern’d which way, or where,
 After this Life they shall be hurl’d :
 Dead, we become the Lumber of the World ;
 And to that Mass of Matter shall be swept,
 Where things destroy’d, with things unborn are kept :
 Devouring Time swallows us whole,
 Impartial Death confounds Body and Soul.
 For Hell, and the foul Fiend that rules
 The everlasting fiery Gaols,
 Devis’d by Rogues, dreaded by Fools,
 With his grim griesly Dog that keeps the Door,
 Are senseless Stories, idle Tales,
 Dreams, Whimsies and no more.”

A large part of Rochester’s work consists of what may be called the poetry of scepticism and irony. The general distrust and dislike of his work by critics of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is, I suspect, due less to the licentious parts of his writings than to their profound scepticism. Readers of the

twentieth century have acquired a new hardness, and can appreciate this kind of poetry probably better than any generation since Rochester's own. The fullest expression of the mood of protest and indignation in his works is to be found in the very notable poem partly adapted from Boileau called a 'Satyr on Mankind'. In a brilliant passage at the beginning of this work he attacks reason itself, complaining that man—

“ ’before certain Instinct, will prefer
Reason, which Fifty times for One does err.
Reason an *Ignis fatuus* of the Mind,
Which leaves the light of Nature, Sense behind.
Pathless and dang'rous wand'ring ways, it takes,
Through Errors fenny Bogs, and thorny Brakes :
Whilst the misguided Follower climbs with Pain,
Mountains of Whimsies, heapt in his own Brain :
Stumbling from Thought to Thought, falls headlong down
Into Doubt's boundless Sea, where like to drown
Books bear him up a while, and make him try
To swim with Bladders of Philosophy :
In hopes still to o'ertake the skipping Light,
The Vapour dances in his dazzled Sight,
'Till spent, it leaves him to Eternal Night.
Then old Age, and Experience, Hand in Hand,
Lead him to Death, and make him understand,
After a Search so painful, and so long,
That all his Life he has been in the wrong.”

Then in an almost equally fine passage he makes an objector defend reason, and he is convinced—as far as “true reason” is concerned. The “reason” which he has been attacking is the “reason” of the humbugs and the bores :

“ This plain Distinction, Sir, your Doubt secures ;
'Tis not true Reason I despise, but yours.”

But, if reason can be defended, Rochester can see no possible defence for Man, and it is against mankind as a whole that he launches his main attack :

“ Be Judge your self, I’ll bring you to the Test,
Which is the basest Creature, Man or Beast :
Birds feed on Birds, Beasts on each other Prey ;
But Salvage Man alone does Man betray.
Press’d by Necessity, *They* kill for Food ;
Man undoes Man, to do himself no good.
With Teeth and Claws by Nature arm’d, *They* hunt
Nature’s Allowance, to supply their Want :
But Man with Smiles, Embraces, Friendships, Praise,
Inhumanly, his Fellow’s Life betrays :
With Voluntary Pains works his Distress ;
Not through Necessity, but Wantonness.
For Hunger, or for Love *They* bite or tear,
Whilst wretched Man is still in Arms for Fear :
For Fear he Arms, and is of Arms afraid ;
From Fear to Fear successively betray’d.
Base Fear, the Source whence his best Passions came,
His boasted Honour, and his dear-bought Fame :
The Lust of Pow’r, to which he’s such a Slave,
And for the which alone he dares be brave :
To which his various Projects are design’d
Which makes him gen’rous, affable, and kind :
For which he takes such Pains to be thought Wise,
And scrues his actions in a forc’d Disguise,
Leads a most tedious Life, in Misery,
Under laborious, mean Hypocrisie.
Look to the Bottom of his vast Design,
Wherein Man’s Wisdom, Pow’r, and Glory join ;
The Good he acts, the Ill he does endure,
’Tis all from Fear, to make himself secure.”

It may sound curious to hear Rochester called a moral poet, but it seems to me that in this passage (which I recommend to the notice of the League of

Nations Union and other peace societies) there is a far sounder morality than in hundreds of sermons and tracts by professional moralists.

It is the same mood of disgust and indignation that inspires Rochester's social and political satires. They have little of the finish and grace of the Satires of Dryden, and none of his magnanimity. They are terrible hard-bitten pictures of the folly and corruption of contemporary life that recall the etchings of Goya in their power, their energy, and the combination of contempt and amusement with which the poet regards his subjects. The two great social satires, 'A Letter from Artemisia in the Town to Chloe in the Country' and 'Timon', are akin both in subject-matter and in treatment to the comedies of Rochester's friends, Etherege and Wycherley. We can find in them a detached and intellectual view of society similar to that of Etherege, combined with a savage satiric energy that recalls Wycherley. The country lady of Artemisia's 'Letter' is a kind of female *Sir Fopling Flutter*, a fool of parts, who can talk real sense and wit when she likes, but is so overlaid by affectation that she is completely ridiculous with her "fifty antick postures", her Frenchified English, and her "fine tender speech" addressed to the monkey. The dinner party at Timon's house to which the author is lured in the hope of meeting Sedley, Buckhurst and Savile, but at which he finds instead Kickum, Ding-boy, Halfwit and Huffle, is a genuine creation of the comic spirit, and neither Wycherley nor Congreve himself could have improved on the scene in which members of the company quote scraps from contemporary plays and comment upon them :

“Halfwit cries up my Lord of Orrery :
 Ah, how well *Mustapha* and *Zanger* die !
 His sense so little forc'd, that by one line
 You may the other easily divine :

*And which is worse if any worse can be
 He never said one word of it to me.*

There is fine poetry, you'd swear 'twere prose,
 So little on the sense, the rhymes impose.
 Ram me (says Dingboy) in my mind Cots wounds,
 Etherege writes airy songs and soft lampoons
 The best of any man ; as for your Nouns,
 Grammar and rules of Art, he knows them not,
 Yet writ two talking plays without one Plot.
 Huffle was for Settle, and *Morocco* prais'd,
 Said rumbling words, like Drums his courage rais'd,
*Whose broad built bulks, the boist'rous Billows bear,
 Zaphee and Sally, Mugador, Oran,
 The fam'd Arzile, Alcazer, Tituan.*
 Was ever braver language us'd by man ?

* * *

“Mine Host who had said nothing in an hour,
 Rose up and prais'd the *Indian Emperor* :
*As if our old World modestly withdrew,
 And here in private had brought forth a new.*
 There are two lines ! Who but he durst presume
 To make the old World, a new withdrawing Room,
 Where of another World she's brought to Bed !
 What a brave Midwife is a *Laureats* Head.”

This is poetry made out of inane conversation, which Rochester regards with the same affectionate interest that a romantic poet might have bestowed on a flower or a sunset.

The political satires are more serious. One of them, the famous ‘History of Insipids’, is perhaps the most terrible of all the contemporary attacks on Charles II’s government. It is, unlike anything else in English

poetry, a lampoon with the dancing movement and the vehement passion of a lyric :

“ Chaste, pious, prudent *Charles* the Second,
 The Miracle of thy Restoration
 May like to that of Quails be reckoned
 Rained on the *Israelitish* Nation ;
 The wish'd for Blessing from Heav'n sent
 Became their Curse and Punishment.

* * *

“ Never was such a Faith's Defender.
 He, like a politick Prince and pious,
 Gives liberty to conscience tender,
 And doth to no religion tye us,
Jews, Turks, Christians, Papists he'll please us
 With *Moses, Mahomet, or Jesus*.

“ In all Affairs of Church or State,
 He very zealous is and able,
 Devout at Prayers, and sits up late
 At the Caball and Council Table ;
 His very Dog, at Council Board,
 Sits grave and wise as any lord.

* * *

“ His Father's Foes he doth reward,
 Preserving those that cut off's Head :
 Old Cavaliers, the Crown's best Guard,
 He lets them starve for want of Bread,
 Never was such a King endow'd
 With so much Grace and Gratitude.

* * *

“ New Upstarts, Pimps, Bastards, Whores,
 That locust-like devour the Land,
 By shutting up the Exchequer Doors,
 When thither our money was trapann'd
 Have render'd *Charles* his Restauration
 But a small Blessing to the Nation.

“ Then *Charles*, beware of thy Brother *York*
 Who to thy Government gives the Law ;
 If once we fall to the old Sport,
 You must again both to Breda
 Where spite of all that would restore you,
 Grown wise by wrongs, we shall abhor you.

“ If of all Christian Blood the Guilt
 Cry loud for Vengeance unto Heaven ;
 The Sea by treacherous *Lewis* spilt,
 Can never be by God forgiven.
 Worse scourge unto his subjects, Lord ;
 Than Pestilence, Famine, Fire or Sword.

“ That false, rapacious Wolf of *France*,
 The Scourge of *Europe* and his Curse,
 Who at his Subjects' cries does dance,
 And studies how to make them worse.
 To say such kings, Lord, rule by Thee,
 Were most prodigious Blasphemy.”

The author of these lines is no mere dilettante versifier. The spirit in which they are written recalls the just and penetrating criticism of Rochester by Monsieur E. D. Forgues, which appeared in ‘ *La Revue de Deux Mondes* ’ in August, 1857 :

“ Non : Rochester fut autre chose qu'un courtisan vicieux et un poète ça et là vraiment inspiré. . . . Il a rampé dans cette fange dont l'avant-dernier Stuart avait rempli White-Hall, et sous laquelle semblent disparaître les traces du sang de Charles I^{er}, mais il n'a pas succombé, débauché vulgaire, sous le poids abrutissant de l'ivresse, sous l'écrasement des voluptés. Il avait naturellement le coeur assez haut et l'esprit assez subtil pour n'être dominé qu'à demi par les influences énervantes auxquelles sa jeunesse fut exposée. Un secret ressort, même en ses plus mauvais jours,

le fait réagir contre elles. Il ne s'assimile pas le poison, il le vomit, à la face de ses empoisonneurs. Ce n'est pas un sceptique avili qui doute de tout et méprise tout, même la vertu, même la justice ; j'aime mieux voir en lui un croyant désespéré, qui débordé par la corruption universelle et mêlé par un caprice du sort, au cortège triomphal du mal victorieux, jette de temps en temps, comme une imprécation involontaire, une malédiction spontanée au milieu des chants de fête, des refrains bacchiques, des hymnes serviles."

Closely akin to Rochester's satires are certain poems which are imbued with that spirit which the late Mr. Charles Whibley called heroic irony. It is the spirit that can appreciate and express at the same time something of the grandeur, and something of the comedy of wickedness. It may be found in parts of Marlowe's 'The Jew of Malta', and in Ben Jonson's 'Volpone'. There is something akin to it in Swift's 'Character of the Earl of Wharton', and Fielding's 'Jonathan Wild'. The most notable embodiment of this spirit in Rochester's poetry is 'The Maim'd Debauchee', a flawless piece of versification, moving with a fire and an energy that Rochester himself never surpassed, and which Dryden only equals in his best work :

"As some brave *Admiral*, in former War
Depriv'd of Force, but prest with Courage still,
Two Rival Fleets appearing from afar,
Crawls to the Top of an adjacent Hill.

"From whence (with Thoughts of full Concern) he views
The wise and daring Conduct of the Fight :
And each bold Action to his Mind renews,
His present Glory, and his past Delight.

- “ From his fierce Eyes Flashes of Rage he throws,
As from black Clouds when Lightning breaks away,
Transported thinks himself amidst his Foes,
And absent, yet enjoys the bloody Day.
- “ So when my Days of Impotence approach
And I'm by Love and Wine's unlucky chance
Driv'n from the pleasing Billows of Debauch,
On the dull Shore of lazy Temperance.
- “ My Pains at last some Respite shall afford,
While I behold the Battels you maintain ;
When Fleets of Glasses sail around the Board,
From whose Broad-sides Volleys of Wit shall rain.
- “ Nor shall the sight of honourable Scars,
Which my too forward Valour did procure,
Frighten new-listed Soldiers from the Wars,
Past Joys have more than paid what I endure.
- “ Should some brave Youth (worth being drunk) prove nice,
And from his fair Inviter meanly shrink,
'Twould please the Ghost of my departed Vice,
If, at my Counsel, he repent and drink.
- “ Or should some cold-complexion'd Sot forbid,
With his dull Morals, our Night's brisk Alarms ;
I'll fire his Blood, by telling what I did
When I was strong, and able to bear Arms.
- “ I'll tell of Whores attack'd their Lords at home,
Bawds Quarters beaten up, and Fortress won ;
Windows demolish'd, Watches overcome,
And handsome Ills by my Contrivance done.
- “ With Tales like these I will such Heat inspire,
As to important Mischief shall incline ;
I'll make him long some ancient Church to fire,
And fear no Lewdness they're call'd to by Wine.

“ Thus Statesman-like I’ll saucily impose,
And, safe from Danger, valiantly advise,
Shelter’d in Impotence urge you to Blows,
And, being good for nothing else, be Wise.”

The best commentary on poetry of this kind is to be found in the wise words of Keats on what he calls the “ poetical character ”, as opposed to the “ Wordsworthian or egotistical Sublime ” : “ It enjoys light and shade ; it lives in gusto, be it foul or fair, high or low, rich or poor, mean or elevated. It has as much delight in conceiving an Iago as an Imogen. What shocks the virtuous philosopher delights the chameleon poet. It does no harm from its relish of the dark side of things, any more than from its taste for the bright one, because they both end in speculation.”

Rochester’s lyrics form a remarkable contrast to his satiric and ironic poems. His best songs are among the loveliest and most delicate pieces of poetic craftsmanship of the seventeenth century. Johnson’s description—“ smooth and easy ; but with little nature and little sentiment ”—is as unjust to them as Gosse’s image of a beautiful child rolling itself in the mud is inapplicable to the satires. Rochester is one of the greatest of English song writers. His love songs in particular have notes of rapture and tenderness that are hardly to be found in English poetry between Campion and Burns. The following song, for example, is marked by a sincerity and an abandonment that are utterly unlike the courtly elegance and mocking grace of the lyrics of his friends Sedley and Dorset :

‘ My dear Mistress has a Heart
 Soft as those kind Looks she gave me ;
 When with Love’s resistless Art,
 And her Eyes, she did enslave me.
 But her Constancy’s so weak,
 She’s so wild, and apt to wander ;
 That my jealous Heart would break,
 Should we live one Day asunder.

“ Melting Joys about her move,
 Killing Pleasures, wounding Blissess ;
 She can dress her Eyes in Love,
 And her Lips can warm with Kisses.
 Angels listen when she speaks,
 She’s my Delight, all Mankind’s Wonder :
 But my jealous Heart would break,
 Should we live one Day asunder.”

This is not the poetry of courtly marivaudage ; it is the product of one of those rare minds that can feel passion and can transmute it into really enchanting word music. Rochester’s best songs, to use the language of Dr. Watts, are images of his heart, burning records of intense personal experience like the songs of Burns and of Heine.

Both the Scottish and the German poet are recalled by the following poem expressing the complex mood in which deep and genuine passion is mingled with an irresistible impulse to inconstancy :

“ Absent from thee I languish still ;
 Then ask me not, when I return ;
 The straying Fool ’twill plainly kill,
 To wish all Day, all Night to mourn.

“ *Dear* ; from thine Arms then let me flie,
That my fantastick Mind may prove
The Torments it deserves to try,
That tears my fix’d Heart from my Love.

“ When weary’d with a World of Woe
To thy safe Bosom I retire,
Where Love, and Peace, and Truth does flow,
May I contented there expire.

“ Lest once more wand’ring from that Heav’n,
I fall on some base Heart unblest ;
Faithless to thee, false, unforgiven,
And lose my everlasting Rest.”

One of the songs is not a love song. It is what Sir Fopling Flutter calls a “ *Bachique* ” or drinking song. Perhaps it is the most finished work of art among Rochester’s poems. It has a classic grace and purity of outline that Simonides or Landor would have approved :

“ *Vulcan*, contrive me such a Cup
As *Nestor* us’d of old :
Shew all thy Skill to trim it up ;
Damask it round with Gold.

“ Make it so large, that fill’d with Sack
Up to the swelling Brim,
Vast Toasts, on the delicious Lake,
Like Ships at Sea, may swim.

“ Engrave not Battel on his Cheek ;
With War I’ve nought to do :
I’m none of those that took *Mastrick*,
Nor *Yarmouth* Leaguer knew.

- “ Let it no Name of Planets tell,
 Fix'd Stars, or Constellations :
 For I am no Sir *Sindrophel*,
 Nor none of his Relations.
- “ But Carve thereon a spreading Vine ;
 Then add Two lovely Boys ;
 Their Limbs in am'rous Folds intwine,
 The Type of future Joys.
- “ *Cupid* and *Bacchus* my Saints are ;
 May Drink and Love still reign :
 With Wine I wash away my Cares,
 And then to Love again.”

Here language is used as only great artists in verse can use it. The word “ damask ” in the fourth line, the “ swelling brim ” in the sixth, the proper names of the third and fourth stanzas, and above all the delicious juxtaposition of *Cupid* and *Bacchus* with “ Saints ” in the last are among the most admirable strokes of art in Restoration poetry. This is a work that recalls Théophile Gautier's conception of the poetic use of words :

“ Pour le poète les mots ont, en eux-mêmes, et en dehors du sens qu'ils expriment, une beauté et une valeur propres comme des pierres précieuses qui ne sont pas encore taillées et montées en bracelets, en collier ou en bagues : ils charment le connoisseur qui les regarde et les trie du doigt dans la petite coupe où ils sont mis en réserve, comme ferait un orfèvre méditant un bijou. Il y a des mots diamants, saphir, rubis, émeraude, d'autres qui luisent comme phosphore quand on les frotte, et ce n'est pas un mince travail de les choisir.”

The circumstances of Rochester's life, the limitations of his class, and the society to which he belonged,

prevented him from achieving that complete and harmonious beauty that we find in the work of more fortunate poets. Even if we make generous allowance for the apocryphal insertions of dishonest editors, his poetry is admittedly fragmentary and unequal. Like his life, it is full of contradictions and paradoxes, the product of a mind at war within itself. Its great merits are courage, sincerity, intellectual honesty and imaginative power. The second half of the seventeenth century was a period in which English poetry was adopting a new discipline of uniformity and restraint after the scintillating extravagances of the metaphysical school. It was a discipline that was salutary in many ways, but it was attended by great dangers. Dullness, mediocrity, mechanical declamation and middle-aged timidity were the snares that dogged the footsteps of the Augustans. Rochester was an admirer of Boileau and a neo-classicist in theory, but his practice provided a most valuable corrective to the shortcomings of the Augustan school. In his writings we find the spirit of youth, something extravagant, untamed and adventurous, not the silvery unruffled beauty of the neo-classical ideal, but the beauty described by Baudelaire, a poet with whom Rochester has many affinities :

“ Que tu viennes du ciel ou de l'enfer, qu'importe,
O Beauté ! monstre énorme, effrayant, ingénu,
Si ton oeil, ton souris, ton pied m'ouvrent la porte
D'un Infini que j'aime et n'ai jamais connu ?

“ De Satan ou de Dieu, qu'importe ? Ange ou Sirène,
Qu'importe, si tu rends—fée aux yeux de velours,
Rythme, parfum, lueur, ô mon unique reine !—
L'univers moins hideux et les instants moins lourds ? ”

To generalize about literary influences is always a dangerous proceeding. It seems to me, however, that the historical importance of Rochester's work has never been fairly estimated. The example of his work must have been a potent factor in preventing English poetry from lapsing into the frigid academic pedantry that stifled French poetry in the eighteenth century. The time has come now to regard him no longer as an elegant trifle or a converted sinner, but as what Voltaire rightly called him in his 'Letters on the English Nation'—a man of genius and a great poet.

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